



CHALLENGES FACING THE MARKETING OF FASHION PRODUCTS IN GHANA: CASE STUDY OF FASHION BUSINESSES IN HO MUNICIPALITY

Daniel Kwabena Danso¹,

Anita Afi Nuworkpor²,

Jonathan E. T. Kuwornu-Adjaottor³ⁱ,

Josephine Aboagyewaa-Ntiri⁴

^{1,2,4}Department of Fashion Design and Textiles Education,
University of Education, Winneba (Kumasi Campus), Ghana

³Department of Fashion Design and Textiles Education,
University of Education, Winneba (Kumasi Campus), Ghana

Abstract:

The study assessed challenges facing the marketing of fashion products in the Ho Municipality of Ghana. A total sample size of two hundred (200) respondents was used in the conduct of this study. Quota sampling technique was adopted in the selection of staff and management of the selected fashion businesses. A total of 215 questionnaires were administered to respondents and 200 were received from them. The results indicated that there are several challenges facing the marketing of fashion products in Ho. These are lack of capital and credit facilities, high income tax, high utility bills and rent, lack of market, low and irregular income, competition of cheap imported clothes, lack of knowledge and skills in the use of clothing production techniques. It was found that challenges hindering the marketing of fashion products could be addressed through financial support, formal training, the ban of importation of fashion goods into the country and the regular conduct of fashion trade fairs. The study recommended that fashion enterprises should be supported by government and financial institutions in the prestart-up phase, the start-up phase and the growing phase in order to reduce the burden on them. Fashion firms should also be creative and innovative to survive the challenges facing the industry, particularly in terms of marketing, textile designs and fashion product designing. Fashion businesses should also embrace social media opportunities to promote their products. There is also the need for infrastructural developments that will help reduce production cost but improve quality.

Keywords: fashion, fashion products, fashion industry, Ghana's fashion industry, marketing

ⁱ Correspondence: email jkadjaottor@gmail.com

1. Introduction

The fashion industry has over the years attracted increasing attention from policy makers, the media and academia. The fashion industry is one of the largest, continuously changing and evolving industries, which influences what people wear. Amankwah, Baidoe & Chichi (2014) defined fashion industry as a market where the material production of garment meets the immaterial production of beliefs and signs as to what clothes look good at a given time. The fashion industry is also perceived as a system, which attempts to balance and profitably integrate complicated blend of original ideas, individual creativity and copying (Corbellini & Saviolo, 2009). The fashion industry consists of four levels: the production of raw materials, mainly fibres and textiles but also leather and fur; the production of fashion goods by designers, manufacturers, contractors, and others; retail sales; and various forms of advertising and promotion. These levels consist of many separate but interdependent sectors, all of which are devoted to the goal of satisfying consumer demand for apparel under conditions that enable participants in the industry to operate at a profit.

Today, fashion has become a big business. Several populations in Europe, for instance, are employed in the fashion industry and other fashion-related activities. The fashion industry in most developed countries such as England, France, USA and Italy employs the services of a large number of professionals, ranging from the designer to the business manager. Admins (2010) stated that in 2010 alone the New York fashion industry supplied over 10 billion dollars' worth of wages to its residents (Amankwah, 2012). Also, the apparel and textile industry supplies over 700,000 jobs in manufacturing alone in the United States. Fashion contributes to about 2.8% of total employment in the UK. Its direct and indirect contribution to UK's GDP was estimated at £37.2bn in 2009. Although the fashion industry developed first in Europe and America, today it is a highly globalized industry (Amankwah, 2012).

The Ghanaian textile sector consists of small-scale dressmakers established as sole proprietor business (Ampofo, 2011). Fashion products within the Ghanaian indigenous textile industry include; traditional woven cloth, dyed materials and printed designs (Asante, 2005; Akrofi, 2004). The Ghanaian fashion industry has contributed immensely to the development of the country through employment creation, gross domestic products and others (Akrofi, 2004). Not only would a vibrant fashion industry generate revenue and create jobs, but could also find manifestation in the tourism sector. Under the president's special initiative (PSI), several garment firms were established in Accra and Tema (Amankwah, Baidoe & Chichi, 2014). The intention of government was to make these garment firms become a lead export earner and also as primary source for employment generation in Ghana (Dzramedo & Dabuo, 2015). The aim of this study, therefore, is to identify challenges hampering the marketing of fashion products in the Ho Municipality and how these challenges impact on the growth and job creation abilities. These will help determine strategies required for

sustainable capacity building in the textile and fashion industries. Ho is the capital and economic hub of the Volta Region of Ghana.

2. Literature review

2.1 Meaning of fashion

Fashion is a widespread theme used to sell products of several categories. Hence, the term extends beyond the clothing industry to reach also accessories, cosmetics, footwear and furnishing (Bohdanowicz & Clamp, 1994; Moore, Lawrie, Fernie, & Hallsworth, 1997). The meaning of fashion depends on the concept and it can form different kinds of meanings in people's minds (Jackson & Shaw, 2009). The extensiveness of the term is reflected in the definition given below, which describes fashion as a way of behaving that is temporarily adopted by a discernible proportion of members of a social group because that chosen behaviour is perceived to be socially appropriate for the time and the situation. The definition highlights two key elements linked to fashion: mass adaptation and constant change. An important aspect is that according to Jackson & Shaw (2009), a design is not fashionable unless majority of people adopt it. Short product lifecycles are also familiar to fashion industry and seasonal changes in collections are prerequisite in order to survive (Malen, 2007). The term fashion should not be confused to the definition of style which can exist outside of the fashion seasons. Nowadays consumers are able to browse different styles, for instance, in the internet, but what is fashionable depends on consumer's own attitude and perception. The current fashion is strikingly shown in the street view in order to convey a status or success (Jackson & Shaw, 2009). Despite the broadness of the term fashion, this study concentrates on clothing since it is the main product category of the fashion companies. After all, clothing represents many of the fashion issues that dominate the industry as a whole (Bohdanowicz & Clamp, 1994).

2.2 Fashion industry

The fashion industry is a product of the modern age. It is one of the industries often labelled 'cultural industries'. Lately these groups of industries have attracted increasing attention from policy makers, media and academia. The fashion industry is one of the largest, continuously changing and evolving industries, which influences what people wear all over the world. Brenninkmeyer (1962) postulates that the fashion industry can be seen as a space where the material production of garments meets the immaterial production of beliefs and signs as to what clothes look good at a given time. The fashion industry is perceived as a system, which attempts to balance and profitably integrate complicated blend of original ideas, individual creativity and copying. The fashion industry consists of four levels: the production of raw materials, principally fibres and fabrics but also leather and fur; the production of fashion goods by designers, manufacturers, contractors, and others; retail sales; and various forms of advertising and promotion. These levels consist of many separate but interdependent sectors, all of

which are devoted to the goal of satisfying consumer demand for apparel under conditions that enable participants in the industry to operate at a profit.

Fashion today is big business; millions of people in Europe are employed in the fashion industry and other fashion related activities. The fashion industry in most developed countries such as France, USA, Italy and England employs the services of a large number of professionals, ranging from the designer to the business manager. Admins (2010) suggests that in 2010 alone the New York fashion industry supplied over 10 billion dollars' worth of wages to its residents. He adds that the apparel and textile industry is one of the largest domestic manufacturers in the US, supplying over 700,000 jobs in manufacturing alone. The fashion industry in UK is a big business that is a success story. The direct value to the UK economy and its 'spill over' effects ranging from IT to tourism puts fashion's total contribution at £37bn. Fashion contributes to about 2.8% of total employment in the UK. Its direct and indirect contribution to UK's GDP is estimated at £37.2bn in 2009. Of this £20.9bn is due directly to retail, wholesale and manufacture. In 2008, consumers spent £46bn on clothes and shoes alone (not counting make up, glossy magazines and other related purchases). London fashion week makes £20m a year for the capital and draws in orders of £100 million. Although the fashion industry developed first in Europe and America, today it is an international and highly globalized industry, with clothing often designed in one country, manufactured in another, and sold worldwide.

2.3 Characteristics of a vibrant fashion industry

Rouse (1991) describes a vibrant fashion industry as a big business; a network of designers, manufacturers, wholesalers and retailers who make fashionable clothes available, a network of public relation officers, journalists and advertising agencies who promote them. Based on Rouse's assertion of a vibrant fashion industry, two concepts come into play.

Firstly, a vibrant fashion industry should have all its players such as the fashion designer, wholesaler, retailer, marketer or advertiser, the supply chain manager, the fashion illustrator, photographer and the like, all playing their roles to promote the industry. Secondly, a vibrant fashion industry partly rests on creative inputs and day-to-day business techniques. This will go a long way to determine the performance of the industry in the competitive business environment.

2.4 Overview of Ghana's fashion industry

The fashion industry consisted of small-scale dressmakers established as one-person business (Ampofo, 2011). He asserts that in 1979, for instance, there were some 138 medium/large scale garment manufacturing companies in Ghana registered with the Ministry of Trade and Industry but declined down to 72 by 1995, most of them, being concentrated in Accra and Tema.

Under the president's special initiative (PSI), which is a special dispensation by the Head of State under the fourth republic of Ghana in response to the huge market

opportunities created by the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA), some garment firms were established in Accra and Tema. The intention of Government was to make these garment firms become a lead export earner and also as a primary source for employment generation in Ghana but it is sad mentioning that this aim has not been realized. It is on this background that the study sought to assess challenges hampering the marketing of fashion products in the Ho Municipality and how these challenges impact on the growth and job creation abilities.

2.5 Complex nature of the fashion industry

There are some characteristics that distinguish the fashion industry from the textile and clothing industry. First of all, fashion industry includes unique design as well as manufacturing of items, such as textiles, clothing, fur products, jewellery, and accessories. Fashion links these factors to modern technology, branding strategies and successful business models. Volatile variation in consumer preferences, arising from uncontrollable factors, is also familiar to this industry. These factors include weather, influences of fashion pioneers, and rapidly developing fads communicated through the media (Jackson & Shaw, 2009). In other words, consumers' behaviour and expectations are hard to predict and this sets challenges for fashion retailers. Therefore, the success of a fashion designer depends on creativity and innovation. Fashion industry is highly competitive and visual features are key factors in fashion retailing (Lea-Greenwood, 2013).

Sometimes even established features are not enough to ensure success since the industry battles with the copycats (Malen, 2007). Secondly, most fashion products are one-use pieces so the fashion industry can be described as disposable (Jackson & Shaw, 2009). Rapid changes are characteristic for fashion industry and therefore success and failure are usually linked to organizational flexibility. Short lifecycles, high volatility, low predictability and high impulse purchasing are typical elements in the industry (Bandinelli, Rinald, Rossi, & Terzi, 2013). Seasonal rhythm throughout the year is an expectation (Malen, 2007) and seasonal sales vary from country to country depending on consumers' needs (Jackson & Shaw, 2009). Usually the seasons are divided into autumn/winter and spring/summer, which can be problematic for designers since their cash flows are not steady throughout the year (Malen, 2007).

2.6 Employment opportunities in a vibrant fashion industry

The fashion industry just like any other institution must have all its players working actively to achieve higher productivity and accelerated growth. There are a lot of job opportunities associated with a vibrant fashion industry that can impact positively on graduate unemployment. These employment opportunities involve the following: fashion designing, production, merchandisers, technical designers, pattern makers, pattern graders, quality control specialists, planners, marketing, retailers, wholesalers, and fashion communication media.

2.7 Other benefits of a vibrant fashion industry

Not only would a vibrant fashion industry generate revenue and create jobs, but could also find manifestation in the tourism sector. Worldwide competition between cities resulting from increasing economic and cultural globalization has been a stimulus for the development of place branding techniques. According to Kavaratzi & Ashworth (2006) cities all over the world need to express their unique characteristics, state their economic, cultural and political goals in order to differentiate themselves from other regions and better compete for resources, tourists and investment. Branding of cities through fashion can contribute to urban development and serve as a tool to improve a city's positioning in terms of tourism. Cities like Paris, Milan, New York and London have gained popularity in tourism, and a major contributing factor for this success has been through fashion events organized by these cities. Similarly, to other creative industries such as music, theatre and movie, the fashion industry can greatly contribute to the urban regional development of Ghana. It has been recognized by city boosters who try to capitalize on branding of their cities through fashion events and projects related to fashion and design. A good example of the recognition of fashion as an important factor in marketing a city is 'The Style City' concept implemented by Abu Dhabi Investment House (ADIH) in Abu Dhabi, Qatar, Morocco, Tunisia and India. The aim of the project is to attract international brands in fashion design, jewellery and furniture in order to establish style and design hubs in emerging markets. Hence, a vibrant fashion industry can be a significant contributor to the promotion of Ghana's creative economy and also serve as vehicle for cultural identity that can play an important role in fostering cultural identity.

2.8 Specific challenges facing the fashion industry

The fashion industry has certain structures, mentalities and processes, which lead to specific characteristics of this sector that have an impact on fashion entrepreneurs. The variety that exists in the fashion industry has to be emphasized. There is an infinite amount of different products, operation methods and individual requirements. This has, of course, also consequences for fashion design newcomers. According to Burke (2008), entrepreneurs do not operate in a vacuum; they work within a company, within an industry and within a particular market sector. The fashion industry's specific challenges are categorized into five: industry conditions, economics of the industry, early finance, governmental support and fashion clusters.

2.9 Industry conditions

Stone (2008) says to be an entrepreneur in the fashion sector is not easy. It demands a lot from fashion start-ups, as it is hard to overview the entire industry. The fashion industry is an unpredictable and hypercompetitive market with short product life cycles. It is a subjective market with the need to be cutting-edge and relevant in terms of the creativeness (Jones, 2006). Subjective in the sense that fashion is based to a great extent on individual preferences and the taste of people. In addition, the fashion sector

can be seen as a saturated and volatile market. To gain market share fashion companies have to take customers of their competitors. The fashion companies have to focus on the unique selling proposition of the products and on the differentiation from competitors. A fashion company needs an innovative business idea and a unique design language to capture the attention of customers that have an infinite choice of different products from upcoming fashion companies. Bruce & Bessant (2002) indicated that in a world where customers have increasing choice about what they buy and from whom, what makes them choose one product or service over another is their taste and what the companies use to capture their attention.

3. Economics of the industry

3.1 Seasonality

One of the most powerful elements in fashion is time. Apparel is developed for different seasons, special events and for different times of the day (Jones, 2006). High fashion designers are working according to the traditionally fashion industry calendar, which is divided into two major seasons—spring/summer and autumn/winter. The whole fashion industry has arranged its business around this standard, it is visible for instance in the timing of fashion shows, which take place two times a year. Fast fashion companies have changed, however, the fashion landscape since they develop annually more than ten collections. Every company has naturally its own fashion cycle, whereby fashion design entrepreneurs mostly follow the international rhythm presenting two major collections a year to be part of the fashion business on a professional base. Managing the cash flow is especially a challenge in the fashion industry with its seasonal schedule. Due to the seasonality, the forecasting of the order volume is another challenging aspect. If a designer is new on the market, it is difficult to indicate how many clothing pieces will be sold. Establishing a sustainable company is hard since developing and producing a collection has to be pre-financed (Moore, Lawrie, Fernie, & Hallsworth, 1997). A fashion designer gets the revenues back when selling the clothes but the next collection has to be started already in the meanwhile. Designers have to pay for the production costs of the clothes upfront. Thus, a critical overlap of costs can emerge for the entrepreneurs, for a time the costs are higher than the earnings.

3.2 Margins-production

Another challenging aspect is the production process. Young fashion design ventures have often problems in finding an adequate production partner to produce their collections. At the beginning, it may be possible to produce in-house but at a certain stage of growth, there will be the need to outsource. Designers have to be aware that to outsource the production means higher cost, uncertainty and a higher risk (Wendy, 2008). At the beginning the production volume is small, which means that the production of each single piece is much more expensive since there are not economies of scales. Consequently, the margin is significantly lower. Additionally, it is a challenge

to forecast the sales volume. Another problem presents the small amount of remaining manufacturing companies in most of the western European countries such as Germany and the UK (Jones, 2006). Sometimes these domestic companies are the only possibility to produce a very small quantity of garments; bigger clothing manufacturers may be more difficult to enter. Moreover, the domestic production companies offer the fashion entrepreneurs a better control over the production process. The fashion designers are able to visit the domestic production company easily and communicate in their own language. There are further difficulties for small fashion businesses. Due to the small quantities of clothing pieces, they are at the back of the queue when it comes to manufacturing. More powerful and larger clients will be in the forefront (Jones, 2006). Manufacturers may let down small fashion design companies in the last minute.

3.3 Early finance

Securing finance for start-ups is one of the major issues fashion entrepreneurs face today. Difficulties in financing a new venture condition the growth opportunities of a company. In the fashion design industry, it is relatively easy to start up in contrast to other industries (Jaeger, 2009). The barriers to entry depend, of course, on the dimension of the venture, but for a small label it is possible to start basically with a sewing machine, compared to the clothing business where expensive machines are required (Burke, 2008). There are two possible sources of external finance: debt and equity. Debt is borrowing money from an outside source with the promise to return the principal, in addition to an agreed-upon level of interest, whereby equity occurs when a company gives away part of the ownership of their business. Sources of external finance can be financial institutions, venture capital, business angels, grants, credit unions and, of course, friends and family. Early finance for fashion start-ups is very limited and mostly only available for companies in a mature stage. New ventures need an adequate amount of capital to survive. A large number of businesses fail due to lack of enough finance backing the venture. Fashion entrepreneurs have difficulties in accessing financial support because the business ideas are often considered to be high-risk investments and the margins are low.

Additionally, the value of a creative product is difficult to measure; the success of a collection depends on a big part on the valuation and personal taste of the customers (Heller, 2002). Hence, it is difficult to indicate the profit of a fashion business. It is hard for a fashion entrepreneur to predict the return on investment, which makes it less attractive to banks and investors. Investors or even business angel investors invest only if they see a large growth potential. Designers and investors/banks have to understand each other in order to gain a common ground for a business connection. Concerning personal challenges of fashion entrepreneurs, fashion designers and business people “speak a different language” which may lead to misunderstandings. Since investors and banks evaluate the business idea and the possibilities of the idea, it is firstly important to have a business plan and secondly to present it in an adequate manner. This seems to be a challenge for most designers. Banks refrain from financing

fashion entrepreneurs when they determine that the business and entrepreneurial skills of a designer are insufficient.

Banks look at four criteria: firstly, the entrepreneur as a person, secondly the collateral, thirdly the return on investment and lastly the certainty in terms of assets. The bank has to be convinced of the commercial success potential of the products, only a small number of designers succeed in doing that. In general, designers are afraid of owing money to banks. However, starting a company with private money represents a high personal financial risk (Brown, 2007).

3.4 Governmental support

Fashion design is recognized as a sub-sector of the creative industry (Dickerson, 2003). In the last years, the creative industry as a whole has drawn attention in politics due to the dynamically economic contribution. In Ghana, governmental support for the creative industry is in the early stages but it is far behind the support for other industries such as the technology and engineering sector. Governmental support for creative entrepreneurs is still very limited in terms of the amount of different support initiatives and it is mostly limited in time. An organization has to apply with a concept for governmental financial support. Then the government has to allow the application and concede money.

3.5 Fashion clusters

As Burke (2008) pointed out, a fashion cluster is formed when a number of companies that work in the fashion industry gather in close proximity and they further form a critical mass providing work, a pool of fashion industry talents and a fruitful environment encouraging innovation, creativity and competition. It includes supporting industries and services, fashion designers, pattern makers, marketing agencies, publishing, retailers and educational institutions that teach fashion skills. According to Burke (2008), clusters encourage cooperation with other companies, facilitate networking and enable useful industry contacts. The businesses in the cluster can be regarded as extended companies that use the common location as a base for a relationship that ease work and offer a learning platform. It is a platform to interact and exchange. For fashion entrepreneurs, these clusters present a potentially useful and beneficial environment to start up a new venture. Especially cultural appealing cities, mostly metropolises, attract creative people. Such clusters of creative people lead to an increased desirability of certain regions, in particular for fashion entrepreneurs.

3.6 Designers' personal challenges affecting the marketing of fashion products

Several factors can influence and challenge the marketing, foundation and growth of a fashion design company: individual network, personality, education, personal background, attitude, role and behaviour of a fashion design entrepreneur (Burns & Bryant, 2007). It has to be mentioned that the following challenges are general reflections and may not obviously apply for all fashion designers. The challenges are

split into seven categories: set of skills (designer's role), personality (behaviour/attitude), business skills, education (specialist versus generalist), communication (network), designer as the brand and small-scaled.

3.7 Set of skills

Jackson & Shaw (2009) argued that designers must be multi-skilled. The tasks of a fashion designer vary, of course, from company to company but as an entrepreneur, a fashion designer needs a large set of skills. It is a leave-taking from the traditional designer role into the balancing act of two elements - creativity with business skills and art with commerce. Firstly, the design part consists of the aesthetic and technical product development process. Secondly, the business part includes the business strategy and management of the label. Fashion design entrepreneurs have to be aware and be in charge of all the different fields of the business: research (market research, trend research, consumer behaviour), product development (aesthetically, qualitatively and technically), sourcing, production, marketing, distribution, sales, general management (business strategy, direction of the brand, positioning, pricing, corporate identity). It seems as one of the most challenging tasks to be capable to balance and manage the two different elements.

3.8 Personality (Behaviour/attitude)

Anyigbah (2014) argued that a strong personality is needed as entrepreneurs face opposition from different sources. Founding and managing a business requires hard work, persistence and the ability to cope with uncertainties. The whole attitude of an entrepreneur such as the approach towards the concept and progress of a new venture is crucial for the development of a company. It influences the company culture, the spirit of enterprise and self-motivation.

3.9 Business skills

Management, marketing, accounting and financing have been considered as the weak points of a larger number of fashion entrepreneurs. The level of business skills and the ability to manage the business side vary from one individual to another. Naturally, it develops and increases by gaining experience. According to McRobbie (1998), designers generate a sense of tension between themselves and the business world.

3.10 Education (Specialist versus Generalist)

Bates (1995) pointed out that those entrepreneurs, who studied entrepreneurship in their schooling, tend to perform better and their firms survive longer than their counterparts who had no entrepreneurship training in their formal education.

3.11 Communication (Network)

According to Burke (2008), networking can be defined as the ability to connect with a broad range of contacts with the aim of sharing useful information and resources. The

relationship is usually mutually advantageous and collaborative. It is preferably a win-win situation. A well-grounded network is essential in every industry but especially in the fashion industry the interaction and communication of people is very important. This can be a challenge for young fashion designers whose network is often very limited. It may take a certain time for a new entrepreneur to build up a network. Through a network of relevant contacts, it is possible to get useful information, to gain access to important contacts and share knowledge. Especially at the beginning, a relevant and broad network is very helpful to start up the label.

3.12 Designer as the brand

A designer has to stand behind and represent the label. This means the fashion designer stands for the brand throughout and as a result incorporates the brand (Davidsson, 2006). The linkage of founder and business implicates a close emotional connection. The tight relation carries the inherent danger of being not rational enough. Especially in the fashion industry, the publicity and awareness of the designer's name and the associated design language is more present than in other branches. Brands' (designers') names became of particular importance from the 20th century. It is quite a challenge to create not only an interesting collection and good products but also to communicate the aesthetics of the products and to connect the personality successfully with the collection. The founder and fashion designer of a small business is at the same time a spokesperson for the label.

3.13 Small-scaled

The intention to set up a label may have various reasons, ranging, for instance, from personal fulfilment, financial self-reliance to artistic freedom, but in the middle of the focus is the generation of value. For a creative person, value can be related to a financial, social or emotional outcome. Heller (2008) stated that some designers view profit as relative, which cannot always be "translated into dollars and cents" as coming from the connection of art, design and commerce.

4. Methodology

This study used a case study approach and the population considered involved all fashion design businesses in Ho municipality. In a case study, a researcher may intensively investigate one or two cases or compare a limited set of cases, focusing on several factors. Case study uses the logic of analytic instead of enumerative induction. In it, the researcher carefully selects one or a few key cases to illustrate an issue and analytically studies it (or them) in detail. He or she considers the specific context of the case and examines how its parts are configured. (Kreuger & Nueman, 2006).

Quota sampling technique was employed to select two hundred and fifteen (215) staff of fashion designing enterprises in Ho municipality as respondents for the study. This sampling technique helped the researcher to ensure that some differences in terms

of age, sex, and educational background were considered to select the respondents for the study (Kreuger & Nueman, 2006).

One set of structured questionnaire was designed as the data gathering instrument and copies were distributed to all the 215 respondents selected with the assistance of selected administrators of the fashion businesses in Ho municipality studied. The questionnaire were designed based on the research questions for the study and had five sections. The first section was on demographic data of the respondents while the second section considered the challenges facing the marketing of fashion products among fashion businesses in Ho. The third section was on the types of fashion products produced by the fashion enterprises in Ho municipality. The fourth section sought for information on how fashion products are promoted in the Ho municipality while the fifth section was on ways of addressing challenges of fashion products in the Ho municipality.

The data collected were computed and the frequencies and percentage values were considered and presented in tables and figures, as well as in descriptive form, in this research report.

5. Results and Discussions

5.1 Overview

The study assessed challenges facing the marketing of fashion products by fashion design enterprises in the Ho Municipality of Volta Region in Ghana. The researcher administered a total of two hundred and fifteen (215) questionnaires to the staff of fashion enterprises. The data gathered, analysis and discussion of the findings are presented in this section of the study. The findings are presented in the form of tables, charts and in descriptive terms for easy understanding.

5.2 Response rate

From the sample population target of 215 selected, two hundred (200) responded adequately, constituting 93% response rate. This section presents an analysis and discussion based on responses that were received from the fashion enterprises.

5.3 Results

5.3.1 Socio-demographic data of respondents

This part of the study analyzed staff background in areas such as their gender, age groupings, educational background and length of service staff worked at the fashion enterprises.

Table 1: Socio-demographic data of respondents

Respondents characteristics	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Sex		
Male	72	36.0
Female	128	64.0
Total	200	100.0
Age group		
Below 25 years	68	34.0
25 – 34 years	88	44.0
35 – 44 years	36	18.0
45 – 54 years	8	4.0
55 years and above	0	0.0
Total	200	100.0
Educational background		
First Degree in Fashion	8.0	4.0
HND Fashion and Textiles	44.0	22.0
Advanced Fashion	24.0	12.0
Intermediate Fashion	40.0	20.0
Apprenticeship (Certificate in dressmaking)	52.0	26.0
Others	32.0	16.0
Total	200.0	100.0
Working experience in fashion business (Years)		
Below 6 years	80.0	40.0
6 – 10 years	64.0	32.0
11 - 15 years	36.0	18.0
Above 15 years	20.0	10.0
Total	200.0	100.0

Source: Field survey, (2016)

As shown in Table 1, a total of 200 staff responded to the questionnaire distributed for this study. Majority of the respondents (64%) were females, indicating that females dominated the responses from the fashion enterprises, as compared to the percentage of males (36%) who responded to the questionnaire.

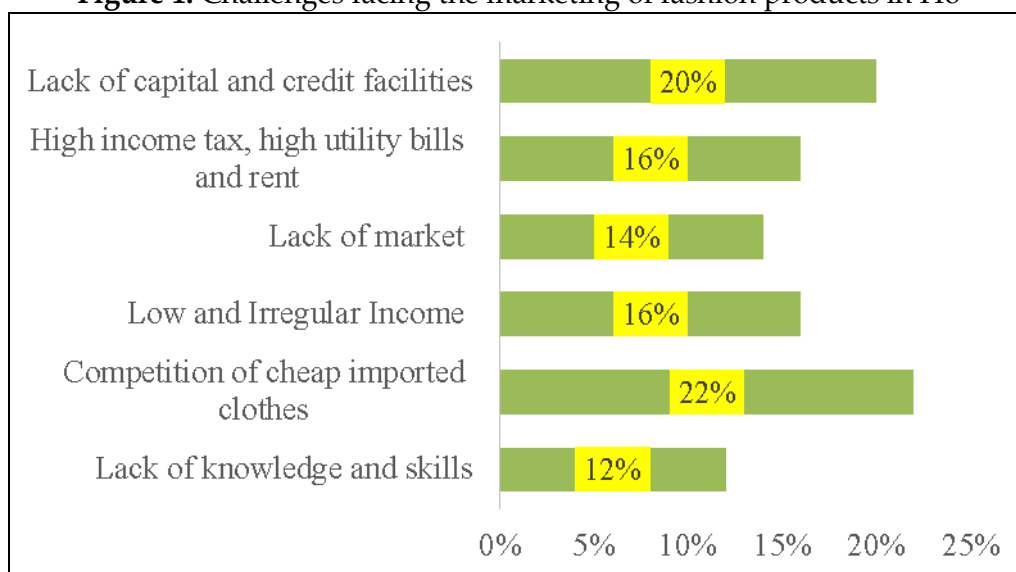
The data result from the field, as shown in Table 1, reveals that 88 respondents between 25 to 34 years of age, representing 44% the highest age group of respondents. The results also indicated that 68 respondents were below age 25, representing 34%. In addition, out of the 200 respondents, 36 were between the ages 35 to 44 years, representing 18%. Another category of the staff in the fashion enterprises were between 45 to 54 years of age who formed 4% of the respondents. None of the respondents was of age 55 or above. The result is an indication that the youth are more involved in the management of fashion enterprises in the Ho Municipality.

It was revealed that respondents from fashion enterprises held a wide range of educational qualifications. Among all the 200 respondents, as indicated in Table 1, 26% held Apprenticeship (certificate in dressmaking) qualification. This is followed by 22% who held HND Fashion and Textiles Studies, 20% who held Intermediate Fashion certificate, 12% who held Advanced Fashion qualification, and 4% held first degree

qualification. Additionally, 16% of the respondents held Other qualifications. This is a good indication that staff of the selected fashion enterprises are well educated to adequately respond to issues hindering the marketing of fashion products in the Ho municipality.

As presented in Table 1, it is evident that 40% of the respondents have worked in fashion enterprises for 5 years or less, 32% have worked for 6 to 10 years, 18% have worked for 11 to 15 years and 10% have worked for more than 15 years. This is an indication that more people have joined the fashion business in Ho municipality in the past five (5) years than in any other period.

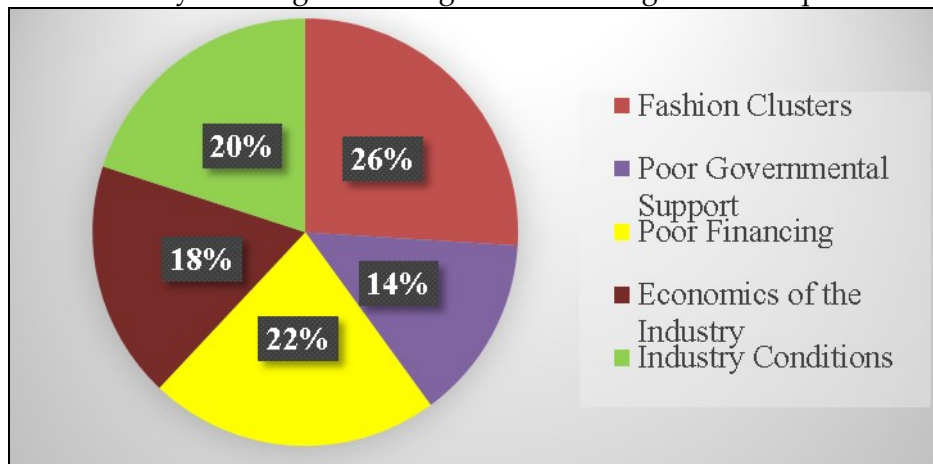
Figure 1: Challenges facing the marketing of fashion products in Ho



Source: Field survey, (2016)

The study assessed the challenges hindering the promotion of fashion products in Ho. The results, as presented in Figure 1, indicated that there was high competition of cheap imported clothes (22%), fashion businesses lacked capital and credit facilities to acquire current and more efficient equipment (20%), high income tax, high utility bills and rent (16%), low and irregular income (16%), lack of market (14%), and lack of knowledge and skills in the use of clothing production techniques for sewing, and skill to create and make personal innovations (12%).

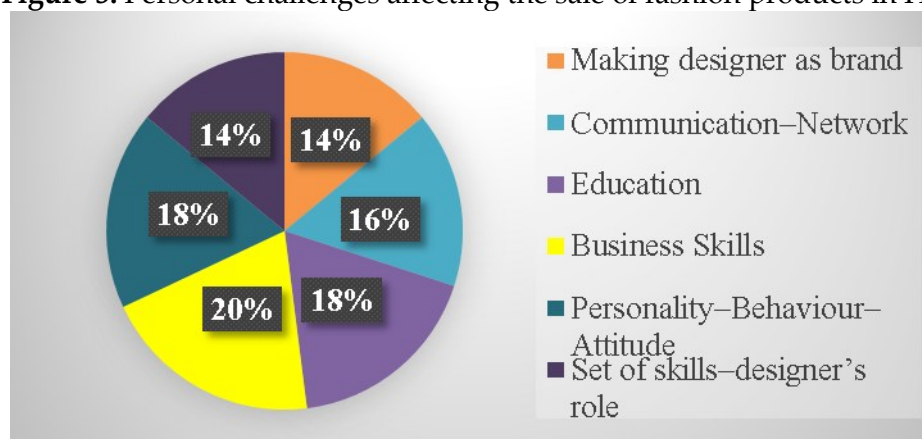
Figure 2: Industry challenges affecting the advertising of fashion products in Ho



Source: Field survey, (2016)

The study also assessed industry challenges affecting the advertising of fashion products in Ho. The results from the study indicated that fashion clusters (26%), poor financing (22%), industry conditions (20%), economics of the industry (18%) and poor governmental support (14%) were the main industry challenges hindering the growth of fashion enterprises in the Ho Municipality (See Figure 2).

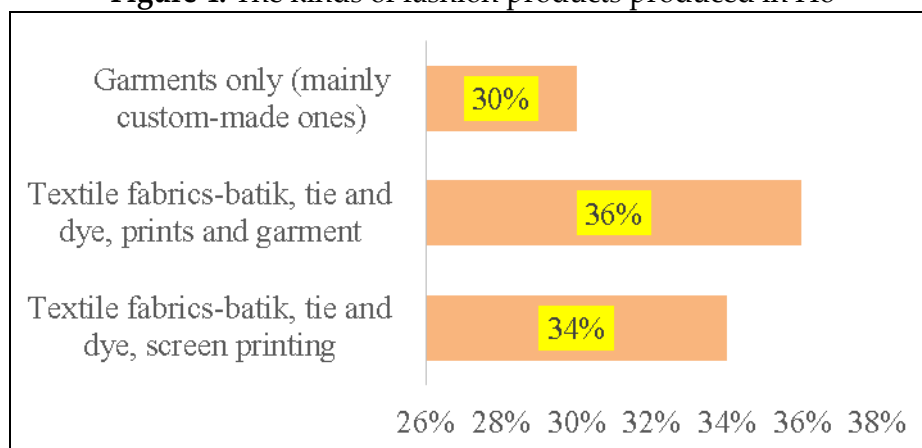
Figure 3: Personal challenges affecting the sale of fashion products in Ho



Source: Field survey, (2016)

The study assessed personal challenges hampering the sale of fashion products in the Ho Municipality. The results, as indicated in Figure 3, are that due to poor business skills (20%), lack of education (18%), personality-behaviour-attitude (18%), communication-network (16%), set of skills-designer's role (14%), and the making designer as brand (14%) fashion businesses were unable to promote their wares.

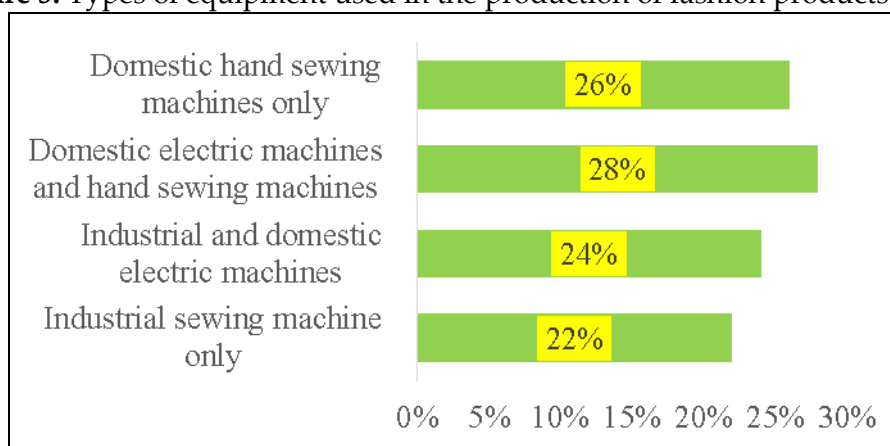
Figure 4: The kinds of fashion products produced in Ho



Source: Field survey, (2016)

The study found out the kinds or types of fashion products specifically produced in the Ho Municipality. The results revealed that textile fabrics-batik, tie and dye, prints and garments (36%), textile fabrics-batik, tie and dye, screen printing (34%) and garments only (mainly custom-made ones) (30%) are the main types of fashion products being produced in the Ho Municipality (See Figure 4).

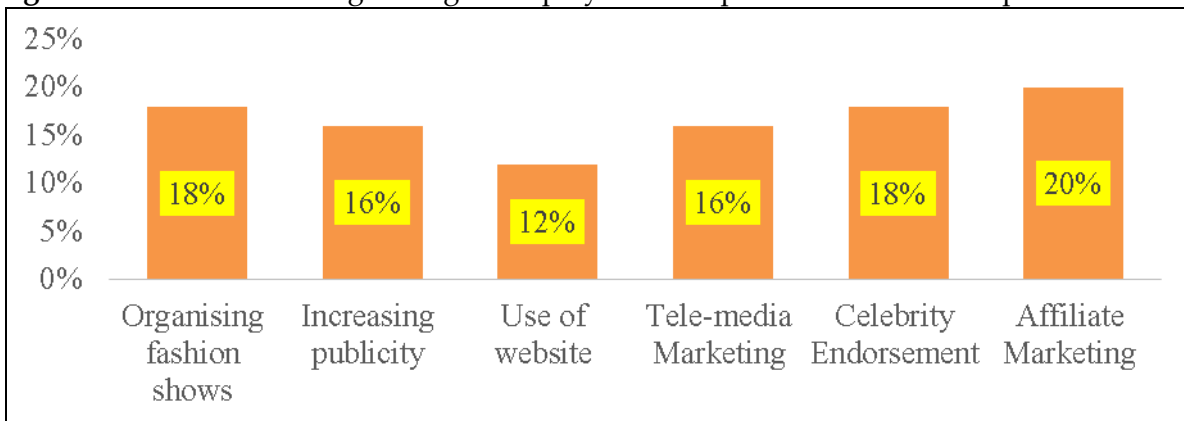
Figure 5: Types of equipment used in the production of fashion products in Ho



Source: Field survey, (2016)

This study also found out the types of equipment used in the production of fashion products within the Ho Municipality. The results, as given in Figure 5, disclosed that domestic electric and hand sewing machines (28%), domestic hand sewing machines only (26%), industrial and domestic electric machines (24%), and industrial sewing machine only (22%) are the main equipment used in the production of fashion products.

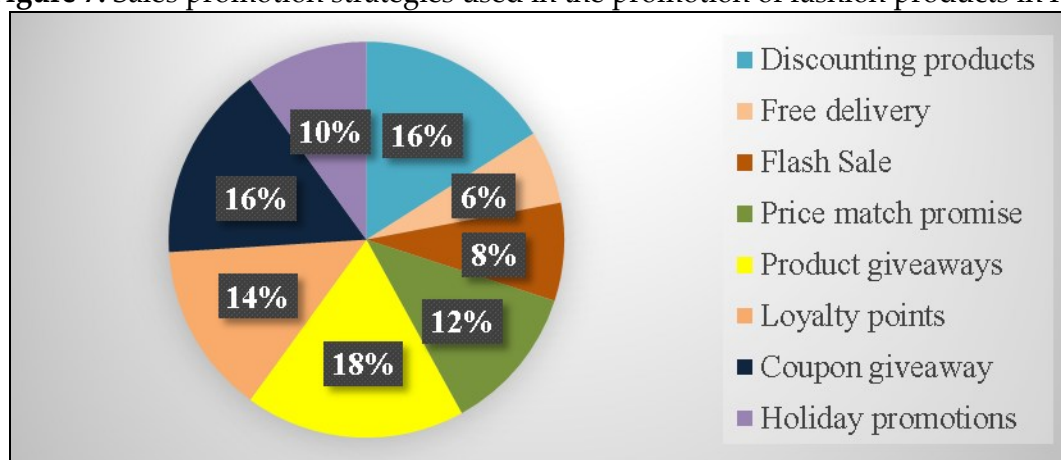
Figure 6: General marketing strategies employed in the promotion of fashion products in Ho



Source: Field survey, (2016)

There are several strategies used in the promotion of fashion products. For this reason, the study specifically assessed the various strategies employed in the promotion of fashion products in the Ho Municipality. The results are that fashion enterprises in the municipality employed affiliate marketing (20%), celebrity endorsement (18%), organised fashion shows (18%), increased publicity (16%), used tele-media marketing (16%), and websites (12%) as strategies in the promotion of their wares (See Figure 6).

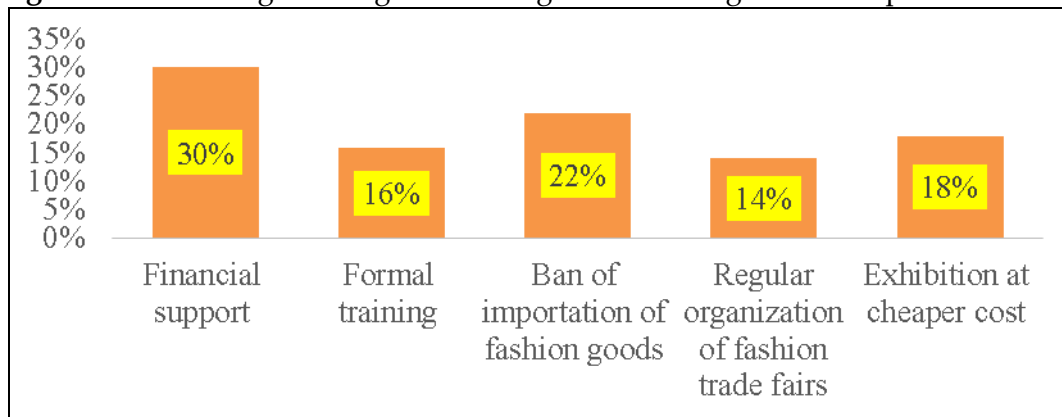
Figure 7: Sales promotion strategies used in the promotion of fashion products in Ho



Source: Field survey, (2016)

The study assessed sales promotion strategies used in the promotion of fashion products in the Ho Municipality. It was identified that product giveaways (18%), discounting products (16%), coupon giveaways (16%), the accumulation of loyalty points (14%), price match promises (12%), holiday promotions (10%), flash sale (8%), and free deliveries (6%) were the promotional strategies used by the enterprises (See Figure 7).

Figure 8: Addressing challenges hindering the marketing of fashion products in Ho



Source: Field survey, (2016)

As one of the main objectives of this study, the research also found out ways challenges hindering the marketing of fashion products could be addressed. The results, as presented in Figure 8, indicate that adequate financial support in the form of loans and credit facilities (30%), the ban on importation of fashion goods into the country (22%), exhibition at cheaper cost to enable participation of dressmakers (18%), formal training for improving and upgrading skills and competency-based workshops (16%), and the regular organization of fashion trade fairs (14%) are ways challenges could be addressed.

5.4 Discussion of Results

This section of the study discusses the various objectives in relation to results from the field, whether they have been met or unmet. The first objective of this study was to find out challenges facing the marketing of fashion products in Ho. The results indicated that there exist several challenges facing the marketing of fashion products in Ho. These are lack of capital and credit facilities, high income tax, utility bills and rent, lack of market, low and irregular income, competition of cheap imported clothes, lack of knowledge and skills in the use of clothing production technique (See Figure 1). Dzrmedo & Dabuo (2015) in their study also disclosed similar factors which hampered the growth of fashion businesses in Ghana. Also, Quarcooh, Gavor & Tetteh-Coffie (2013) and Boakye (2008) found related results as they cited similar challenges facing the promotion of fashion products in Ghana. These challenges should be addressed by individual fashion business owners and government in order to grow our local fashion businesses.

The second objective was to identify the kind of fashion products being produced in Ho. The study found that textile batik, tie and dye, screen printing, textile fabrics, and garments only are the kinds of fashion products being produced in the Ho Municipality (See Figure 4). Similar results are evident in the studies by Dzrmedo, Ahiabor & Gbadegbe (2013); Ampofo (2011) and Sarpong, Howard, & Osei-Ntiri (2011) who researched about the kind of fashion products being produced in Ghana. There is

therefore the need for fashion businesses to be creative and innovative in the design of fashion products to attract more customers.

The third objective was to assess how fashion products are promoted. The results indicated that fashion products are promoted through fashion shows publicity, the use of website, tele-media marketing, celebrity endorsement, and affiliate marketing (See Figure 6). In a related study, Bandinelli, Rinaldi, Rossi, & Terzi (2013) and Malen (2007) disclosed similar ways fashion products were promoted in other parts of the world. Since fashion product promotion strategies are similar among businesses in the Ho Municipality, there is the need for products to be differentiated to attract more sales and establish customer loyalty.

The final objective was to address challenges hindering the marketing of fashion products. Results from the study indicated that challenges hindering the marketing of fashion products could be addressed through financial support, formal training, the ban on the importation of fashion goods into the country and the regular conduct of fashion trade fairs (See Figure 8). These findings are related to that of Asare (2012) who recommended critical success factors for the growth of fashion businesses. These solutions should be effectively implemented for successful promotion of fashion products in Ghana as a whole.

6. Conclusions and Recommendations

6.1 Conclusions

The study concluded that, as a result of high competition of cheap imported clothes, poor capital and credit facilities, high income tax, utility bills and rent, low and irregular income, lack of market, and the lack of knowledge and skills fashion businesses were the challenges faced by fashion enterprises in the promotion of products. The study concluded that Fashion Enterprises in the Ho Municipality produce different kind of fashion products. These are textile fabrics-batik, tie and dye, prints and garment, textile fabrics-batik, tie and dye, screen printing and garments only (mainly custom-made ones). In addition, the study concluded that there were several ways through which fashion products are promoted in the Ho Municipality. It concluded that product giveaway, discounting, coupon giveaways, the use of loyalty points, price match promises, holiday promotions, flash sale, and free deliveries will be effective means to promote fashion products. Finally, the study concluded that challenges hindering the marketing of fashion products in the Ho Municipality can be addressed through the ban on importation of fashion goods into the country, exhibition at cheaper cost to enable participation of dressmakers, formal training for improving and upgrading skills and competency-based workshops, and the regular organization of fashion trade fairs.

6.2 Recommendations

Based on the results of the study, the following recommendations have been made to help address challenges facing marketing of fashion products. Fashion enterprises should be supported by government and financial institutions in the prestart-up phase, the start-up phase and the growing phase in order to reduce the burden on them. Ghanaian fashion firms should also be creative and innovative to survive the challenges presented to the industry, particularly in terms of marketing, textile design and application to product design. Fashion enterprises should invest in modern technologies for production and hence reduce production, marketing and labour costs. Fashion businesses can also embrace social media opportunities to promote their wares. There is also the need for infrastructural development that will help reduce production cost and hence improve quality. Government should consider ways to be responsive to domestic textile challenges through policies that provide economic support.

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