



## Made in Ghana: Strategic Marketing of Ethnic Items

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Village seamstresses in Ghana, primarily women, need access to markets outside of Africa. To this end, researchers surveyed women from a southeastern state in the U. S. regarding their preferences for Ghanaian fabrics in women's garments, accessories, and home goods. Online stores such as The African Fabric Shop, Global Girlfriend, and Global Mamas are examples of businesses that create job opportunities for women in rural African villages. These businesses create a way for global customers to support these women by purchasing ethnic products on their websites. This system generates income for the companies so they can provide more opportunities for African women.

'Cultural Creatives' (Ray, 1997) is a population group that includes college-educated individuals, mostly women, individuals who value ecological sustainability, and is relevant to the current study. Cultural Creatives 'want to know where a product came from, how it was made, who made it, and what will happen when they are done with it' (Ray, 1997, p. 32).

Littrell, Ogel

& Kim (1999) used Cultural Creatives to guide marketing efforts of ethnic apparel to defined consumer segments. In order to determine if Ghanaian apparel will sell in local boutiques we analyzed the aesthetic preferences of state residents regarding Ghanaian garments, accessories, and home goods. Providing the results to village seamstresses will allow their target market to expand and provide them with new career opportunities and income.

Segmenting consumer groups and developing consumer typologies has been viewed as an effective tool for understanding consumer behavior (Barnes et al., 2007). The purpose of this study is to define and explore different consumer segments related to ethnic apparel shopping. This study's findings on ethnic apparel consumer typologies or classification schemes will provide the basis for understanding and targeting different types of consumers; therefore they will enable ethnic products (Ghanaian) to be competitive in a select (southeastern state) global market.

### Methods

*Measures.* Three sources informed the development of the Ghanaian Fabric Study questionnaire. Cultural Creatives items were adopted from Ray (1997) and Littrell et al. (1999). Aesthetic preference items were adopted from Hyllegard and Morgado (2001). Each item was measured on a 5-point Likert scale where 1=strongly disagree and 5=strongly agree. Demographic items were also included.

*Data Collection.* For the sample we wanted to include women between the ages of 18-85 years. We targeted merchandising students at the state university, women from professional organizations in the state, customers of select boutiques in the university town, and state extension homemakers. Incentives included course bonus credit for students and inclusion in a \$200 cash drawing for homemakers. The data for this study were collected via an online Qualtrics survey. A total of 577 usable data were collected.

*Sample Description.* Ages in the sample ranged from 18 to 80, with the largest age group 18-29 years old (30.2%) followed by 45-59 years old (23.2%). A majority of the sample indicated "some college and above" as their highest education completed. Approximately 57% of participants indicated their annual household income as more than \$50,000, which is similar to the total population income statistics.

### **Results**

Cluster analysis was performed to identify consumer groups based on socially responsible shopping behavior. Then, the identified segments were compared in terms of consumer preference in three different types of ethnic fabrics (i.e., Kente, Batik, and Adinkra) and consumer shopping and consumption behavior (i.e., purchase preference as a garment, preference to use as trim on a garment, preference to use as home furnishings, preference to use as accessories, and comfortableness to wear among others). Factor scores from ten items regarding ethnic apparel shopping behavior (Cultural Creatives) were used to define consumer

segments. Based on the changes of Schwarz's Bayesian Criterion (BIC), R-squares ( $R^2$ ), and variances of a different number of cluster solutions (S. Sharma, 1996), three-cluster solution was selected for further analysis. Then, a K-means clustering procedure was conducted to obtain the final clusters with the initial seeds provided by the hierarchical analysis solution. The results from the cluster analysis indicated that there are three distinct clusters in regards to ethnic apparel shopping. In addition the clusters showed significant differences in shopping and consumption of three different ethnic textiles ( $p < 0.001$ ). **Cluster 1** (*Social Shoppers*), accounting for 25 % of the sample, was distinguished from other segments by its higher ratings

in social causes (e.g., "I would buy products from Ghanaian designers just to help support the craft producer."). Shoppers in this segment show the highest interest in using these ethnic fabrics in garment trims or home furnishing items than in other segments. However, this segment indicated the lowest preference to purchase and wear the ethnic clothes in front of their family and friends. Indicating that this segment is not comfortable wearing ethnic clothing but they are willing to use it as an accent of their style. **Cluster 2** (*Holistic Shoppers*) represented 42% of the respondents and was distinguished by highest ratings in social causes related to ethnic apparel as well as aesthetic appeal of ethnic apparel (e.g., "I like the style of ethnic clothing."). This group shows the highest purchase intention among others and they are comfortable wearing the ethnic apparel ( $p < 0.001$ ). They also want to have the ethnic fabrics for their home furnishings.

**Cluster 3** (*Ethnic Stylist*), accounting for 33%, gave aesthetic appeal of ethnic apparel the highest rating and assigned lowest ratings to social causes. Purchase intention of ethnic apparel of this segment is higher than purchase intention of social shoppers ( $p < 0.001$ ). Overall, all three consumer segments more likely to have Kente fabric for their garment and home furnishings than the other two fabrics ( $p < 0.001$ ) and they prefer Batik as trim on a garment to Kente or Adinkra ( $p < 0.001$ ). Also consumers feel more comfortable wearing garments accessories made from Kente than Batik and Adinkra ( $p < 0.001$ ).

**Discussion**

Village women in Ghana need research based information on what will sell in the global market. The results from the state surveyed indicate products in Kente were preferred by respondents for garments and home goods and batik was preferred as trim on a garment. Further implications will be discussed. References will be provided upon request.