



## **Symbolic Significance Of African Prints: A Dying Phenomenon In Contemporary Print Designs In Ghana**

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***Abstract:***

*An apparent phenomenon that projected African prints in the 1960's and 1970's to be accepted and customized as valuable and prestigious cloth in Ghana and other countries in the sub-region is the aesthetic values and most significantly the symbolic meanings they carried. Empirical evidence shows that, most Ghanaians, in the past, built wardrobes of high quality symbolic African prints for posterity whereas others bought and wore cloths with symbolic designs to cast insinuations, yell insults at their rivals, exhibit their love, and to serve as a means of distinguishing and projecting one's social status. A survey of current trends in African print designs in Ghana revealed a fast changing design paradigm in contemporary African prints with symbolism being the thing of the past. This comparative study examines the factors attributing to the change, implications of the change and makes feasible recommendations for future design developments. Industrial and market surveys were conducted through descriptive observational study approach to critically observe and examined the classical and contemporary printed designs of major textile firms in Ghana with specific reference to Textyles Ghana Limited, Printex Ghana Limited, and Akosombo Textiles Limited. Interviews and observable findings reveal that, designers of African prints now place much emphasis on aesthetics which to them attract wider consumers especially the youth. Symbolic designs are only produce on request since they are mostly preferred by the elderly folks. The study recommends integration of aesthetics and symbolism in African print designs to attract more consumers to maximize profits and for preservation of Ghanaian cultural heritage.*

***Keywords:*** African Prints; Classical; Contemporary; Symbolism; Aesthetics

## **1.Introduction**

Symbolism is one of the major attributes of African culture. In light of this the indigenes of Africa generally take delight in beauty and symbolism and would mostly want to be projected as such. One way of exhibiting this is through the use of colourful and unique Africans prints known popularly as “Mummy cloths” in Ghana and other similar prints in the West African sub region. These cloths are made up of wax, java and fancy with conceptualized designs which are symbolic and significant to African culture. There are designs depicting images of proverbs, local emblems relating to traditions of kingships or authorities of chiefs, designs with educational significance, and commemorative cloth depicting individuals and events (Clarke, 2002).

Sylvanus (2007) attests that wax print originated from Java from the Javanese batiks which were produced by hand with local technology. The European industrialists industrialized the production of the batik effects but the industrialized reproduction process was poor in quality as it left fine lines on the fabric that resulted from the cracking of the wax technique. These imperfections though unappreciated by the Javanese, were highly appreciated in West Africa where the prints became popular and gained wider market. The prints (Wendren, 2008) were exported to the Gold Coast and spread over West Africa into Central Africa. They became extremely popular and over time the Africans customised and personalised the designs. Nowadays they are primarily made in Ghana and have strong cultural, social and economic importance.

Anthropologists have debated upon the origin of African prints in Ghana. However, a common fact that most scholars attest to is that in connection with the Ashanti Soldiers who were believed to have first brought the prints to the Gold Coast after their service in the Royal Dutch East-Indian Army in some colonies in the present day Indonesia. The soldiers were given to serve the Dutch due to the cordial relationship that existed between the then Asantehene and the Dutch commissioner. The Gold Coast women upon seeing the prints were highly fascinated about their aesthetic qualities and expressed special interest in them. Consequently trade links between Holland and Gold Coast were established upon which large quantities were brought to the Gold Coast around the second and third quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, specifically between 1837 and 1872 (Kroese, 1976; Osei-Bonsu, 2001).

The only foreign textiles in the Gold Coast before the introduction of the Javanese prints were dyed fabrics from Manchester. The Manchester dyed fabrics could not compete with the wax Javanese prints and lost their popularity. When the British realized this

drastic change, they sought for diverse ways to improve upon their dyed fabrics and this led to the production of fancy and imitation wax prints. Unfortunately for them they did not succeed the competition in sense the Gold Coast women were able to distinguish between the imitation wax prints by the British from the real wax print from Holland (Sabotey, 1979 as cited in Osei-Bonsu, 2001).

A notable personality whose name became popular and used synonymously for real wax prints from Holland is Alex Dumas, a Lebanese merchant who first traded in wax prints in the Gold Coast. The Gold Coast women not knowing the name of the prints named them after him. Within the sub region, a Scotsman by name Ebenezer Brown Fleming, a merchant from Glasgow was known to have played a significant role in the importation of wax block prints to West Africa. His successful commercial activities in the trade of wax prints made him obtained monopoly at the initial stages and was named as the major importer of these special textiles (Kroese, 1976).

African prints have philosophical significance. The prints (Orhin, 2007) have names that could easily depict or explain the beliefs, practices and culture of Ghanaians. Wendren (2008) opines that the patterns in the prints tell stories of relevance to the wearer, such as proverbs, poems and traditional African fables. The colours also hold philosophical significance as they can represent social standing, age, tribal orientation and marital status.

In the 1960s and 1970s, textile prints had names that could easily depict or explain the beliefs, practices and culture of Ghanaians. Women bought clothes according to the names of the cloth which circulated quickly. They built wardrobes of high quality symbolic African prints for posterity whereas others bought and wore cloths with symbolic designs to cast insinuations, yell insults at their rivals, exhibit their love, and to serve as a means of distinguishing and projecting one's social status (Orhin, 2007). Some of the popular titles from the fledging Ghana Textile Printing Company (GTP) in Accra and cloths imported from Holland were "Akyekyedee akyi" which means, the back of a tortoise in Akan language. Others were "meho yefe kyen mekora," literally meaning I am more beautiful than my rival, "Dua koro gye nframa a ebu", meaning if a single tree faces the storms alone it breaks, and "Fathia fata Nkrumah", which means Fathia is suitable for Nkrumah referring to the first President of Ghana Dr. Kwame Nkrumah and his Egyptian wife Fathia, "Ahonnee pa nkasa" which literally translated as precious beads make no noise. In other words, empty barrels make the most noise or a

good person needs not to blow his own horns, among others (Orhin, 2007; Wendren, 2008).

Orhin further indicates that it is difficult to trace how manufacturers in the wax print business penetrated the culture of Ghana and captured the hearts of many women with exotic designs. In those days, it was highly prestigious to wear expensive guarantee wax from Holland with the brand name “Hollandais” or the block wax from GTP and others from Tema Textiles Limited (TTL) etc. However, the era of cloth communication is fast fading and one can conveniently assert that gone are the days when women rushed to buy cloths to communicate by casting insinuations or yell insult at others. In its place is a different culture and perspective; cheap wax from China and other African countries have flooded the Ghanaian market, selling cheap sometimes, one-third of the price of locally produced wax prints. The situation is very alarming which has caused many local printing firms to close down. The study therefore takes a critical look at factors causing the decline of symbolism in African prints both in usage and design and suggest ways to salvage the situation towards the revitalization of the local textile printing firms.

## **2.Methodology**

The study employs descriptive observational study design and mainly relied on observation and interview for data collection, presentation and discussion of results. Industrial and market surveys were conducted to critically observe and examine both classical and contemporary printed designs of major textile firms in Ghana, namely; Textstyles Ghana Limited, Printex Ghana Limited, and Akosombo Textiles Limited. Selected Vlisco and ABC prints on the open market and the sales and distribution outlets of the affiliated companies with specific reference to Char Textiles Distribution (CTD), Premium Textiles Company, Printex and Woodin were also assessed. Designers at the various design studios of the selected firms who are the main brain behind the type of print designs that come on the market were engaged in focus group discussion and face to face interviews for interactive deliberations to ascertain factual information to authenticate the observable findings obtained from the industrial and market surveys. The research questions that were formulated primarily aimed at finding out:

- The design concepts of African prints that were trendy in the 1960s and 1970s.
- The design paradigm that is trendy in contemporary African prints.

- The changes that have occurred in African print design over the years, the causes and effects.
- The design strategy that can be employed to maximize patronage and for future design developments.

### *2.1. Population And Sampling*

Two categories of population were studied. The first comprises resource personnel of the aforementioned textile firms made up of designers, design managers, sales and distribution personnel, managers, and cloth merchandisers in the open markets. The second category consists of printed design samples of the selected textile firms with specific reference to designs produced in the 1960s and 1970s and that of 2000 and 2010. A comparative examination was conducted on what is called “classical” and “contemporary” designs which helped to establish the true picture of the two sets of prints for conclusions to be drawn. Purposive and simple random sampling techniques were used. The period under review and the factories in question were purposefully chosen based on the premises that studies have shown the popularity of symbolic African prints designs in the 1960s and 1970s. Justifiably, ATL, TGL, and Printex are the only surviving textile printing factories in Ghana who are still in full operation. The selection of the sample printed fabrics was, however, done randomly to avoid any prejudice.

## **3. Results And Discussion**

In order to establish a better understanding and basis for discussion, a background discussion of how the prints are named and the essence for naming them becomes very vital.

### *3.1. Naming of African Prints \*

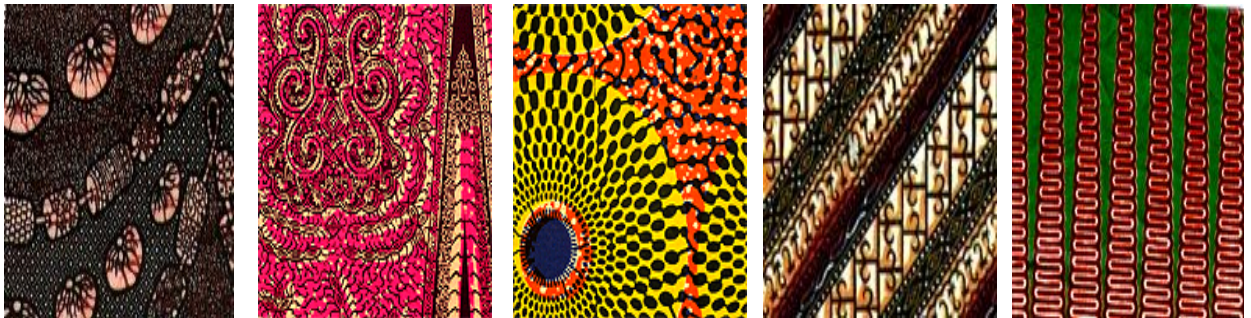
Generally, textile prints are technically named based on their mode of production. Distinctions can be drawn between wax, java, fancy etc. The market for the prints is, however, highly determined by the culture of the people or the local society in which the prints are going to be used. It has been observed that Africa is one of the major consumers of wax, java and fancy prints. However, for the big bench-mark textile printing companies in the world such as Vlisco and ABC, the African influence in design is of paramount importance. In view of this Vlisco and ABC designers constantly search

for new and appropriate ideas by travelling to Africa to interact with customers and distributors in order to create suitable designs and colour combinations to satisfy the taste of African consumers (Shop Africa, 2008).

The study through market and industrial surveys found that, aside the technical names that are given to the prints by textile manufacturers, symbolic names are given to the prints by market women who trade in textiles and sometimes customers who use the prints. Market women interacted with hold the view that they sometimes use the naming as a form of marketing strategy to attract customers to boost sales. The names are usually coined from the type of motifs and colours found in the prints. Abstract names are as well given to the prints to suggest an important event, personality or a popular proverb. According to the merchandisers, the wearer uses the symbolism of the print as a form of visual communication. In addition, findings from visual examination of the classical designs indicate that, symbolic names are given to the design to portray or record happenings and experiences in life. Totemic animals and proverbs are used in the prints to communicate ideas, philosophies, values, beliefs and practices of the people. The colours, motifs and textures depicted in this category of African prints are organized in the manner that makes them aesthetically pleasing. The prints exhibit high artistic qualities through excellent application of design elements and principles. Although colour harmony is of paramount importance in African prints due to the use of multiplicity of colours, contrasting bright colours were used alongside with suitable textures and motifs to generate rich looking prints of high aesthetic value in classical print designs.

### *3.2. Classical African Print Designs (1960s and 1970s)*

As indicated by Clarke (2002), symbolism forms an integral part of African culture and this is reflected in the Ghanaian fashion. It is against this background that African prints are made to bear symbolic significance to reflect the life style of the people. Both the motifs and the colours have symbolic meanings that reveal the ethics of African culture. These are evident in the documented African print designs in Plates 1 to 10 which were trendy in Ghana in the 1960s and 1970s and had symbolic meanings believed to have received high patronage during the time.

*Plate 1**Plate 2**Plate 3**Plate 4**Plate 5**Plate 6**Plate 7**Plate 8**Plate 9**Plate 10*

*Plates 1-10: Classical African print designs of the 1960s and 1970s*

*Source: Market and Industrial Survey (2011)*

The design in Plate 1 with the name Achimota commemorates the founding of the Achimota School and College in 1927 by the then Governor of the Gold Coast, Gordon Guggisberg. The logo of Achimota, the black and white keys of the piano (as shown on the top part of the cloth on the left) symbolizes harmony and unity in diversity. The design in Plate 2, Koforidua Flowers symbolizes urbanization, economic prosperity and conspicuous consumption. The name was deduced from the expression; “Koforidua nhwiren, dea mede wo reye” which literally translated as; “Koforidua flowers, what use do I have of you”. The name was given to the cloth to reflect the issue of conspicuous consumption by some rich people during the rapid urbanization of Koforidua following the success of the cocoa industry, and later the diamond mining industry in the Eastern Region of Ghana at the turn of the nineteenth century. The design shown in Plate 3 is known as “ABCD” from the proverb; “Suukuu nko ne nanyansa nko” which suggests that attending school does not mean that one would be wise. Plate 4 shows a print design

called “Afe bi ye asiane”. The name is taken from the expression, “Afe bi ye asiane”, meaning some years are inauspicious or unlucky. It is a symbol of misfortune, bad luck and inauspicious times. “Afa me nwa” which means you have taken me cheap and as easy as the snail, is the design in Plate 5.

Plate 6 is a design generated from the proverb “Ahonnee pa nkasa”, meaning precious beads make no noise. That is to say that empty barrels make the most noise. This suggests that a good person needs not to blow his/her own horns. The design in Plate 7 is “Akekeydee akyi” deduced from the proverb “Huriye si akyekyedee akyi a, osi ho kwa” meaning the tsetsefly sits on the back of the tortoise in vain, it cannot suck any blood through the hard shell. This suggests that engaging in futile enterprise serves one no good. The eighth design (Plate 8) is “Gramophone Apawa” referring to an old record album which was popular in the 1960s. The design reminds its users about the good old days when disc music was reserved to the privilege few rich people in the society. The design in Plate 9 is “Adukuro mu nsuo” that is, Grove water which comes from the expression; “Adukuro mu nsuo akonno-akonno, manya bi ama me mpena anom”. Literally meaning, may I find some sweet grove water to offer my lover! It is a symbol of love, affection, friendship, and satisfaction. Design in Plate 10 is known as “Nkrumah Pencil”. It is a symbol of authority. The cloth signifies the power Dr. Kwame Nkrumah had to use his pen to sign deportation and detention orders as a method of controlling his political opponents.

Inferring from the sampled classical designs, it is palpable that all the designs bear symbolic significance which can visually be seen through the kind of patterns depicted in the prints. Relatively intricate design concepts with wax effects primarily characterized the prints. Colours used in the prints are tailored towards the preference of the elderly. The designs have direct significance to the various occasions in the Ghanaian society in terms of cultural and social values. Generally, the kind of clothing a person wears determines his or her personality and social status or class. In light of this, most African prints in the past were made with symbolic patterns for the various classes of people in the society and to grace special social gatherings such as naming and outdoor ceremonies, marriage and wedding ceremonies, durbars, funerals and other festivities. The prints serve as a means to boost the ergo of the wearer through the use of brilliant and symbolic colours and motifs. Religious groups and tribes were identified by the kind of local prints they wore through the use of symbolic African print designs. Indisputably, the era of cloth communication saw the nation’s identity and cultural heritage being



projected and preserved to the extent that most people built wardrobe of African prints with symbolic patterns for posterity to be shown to the generation to come.

### *3.3. Contemporary African Print Designs (2000 and 2012)*

The era of strong projection of symbolism in Africa is fast fading and African print is among the major products that suffer the consequences. African print designs seen today have little or no symbolic connotations in relation to socio-cultural values of Ghana. A survey of textile print designs on the market reveals a complete change in design paradigm from the complex and symbolic classical designs of the 1960s and 1970s to very simple design concepts with less design details. The designs show simple pattern layout usually in half-drop, set or tossed pattern layout with much emphasis to colour which is oriented toward the preference of the youth. Plates 10 to 20 present samples of contemporary African print design.



*Plate 11*

*Plate 12*

*Plate 13*

*Plate 14*

*Plate 15*



*Plate 16*

*Plate 17*

*Plate 18*

*Plate 19*

*Plate 20*

*Plates 11-12: Contemporary African print designs (2000-2012)*

*Source: Market and Industrial Survey (2012)*

Evidently, the designs show no symbolic traits. The designs are based on abstract and geometric concepts with no significant names attached to them. Colour is given much priority as against other design elements which according to the designers (Focus group discussions, 24<sup>th</sup> June, 2011), serves as a major element of attraction to consumers. Some of the designs exhibit gold or silver metallic print effects serving as a kind of embellishments to enhance the aesthetic appeal of the prints. This practice and the aforementioned design characteristics were perceptibly not trendy in the 1960s which therefore suggest a significant change in design concepts of today's African print designs. Responding to what has brought about the change, designers of the selected textiles firms contended that, change in consumer preference is the major cause, and in order to meet consumer satisfaction to maximize patronage, the local textile printing firms have redirected their design focus in conformity to the taste of consumers. They added that majority of consumers especially the youth do not give priority to symbolic designs but rather consider aesthetic as the ultimate parameter in choosing textile print designs for their garments.

#### *3.4. Factors Attributing To The Change In Design Paradigm Of African Prints In Ghana*

A number of factors attribute to the change in design paradigm of African print in Ghana. However, after a critical study of the design trends and concepts of classical and contemporary African prints designs, the following findings became apparent as major causes: change in consumer preference, competitive designs from the offshore textile firms, dynamism in modern fashion, concerns for design utility, economic concerns in design, change in production methods, and target market diversity.

##### 3.4.1. Change In Consumer Preference

The study finds that consumer taste for African print has changed gradually from the basis of symbolism to aesthetic over the last four decades; hence, the change in design concept. In the 1960s when the prints were first introduced to the shores of the Gold Coast, women of the times embraced the prints as they were highly fascinated by the intricate symbolic designs and brilliant colours which made them more attractive compared to the already existing dyed cloth from Britain as indicated by Kroese (1976). The head of the design studio of ATL (Personal communication, 3<sup>rd</sup> July, 2011) attested that most textile consumers now first assess the aesthetic qualities of the print with reference to colour and motifs before considering symbolism. He emphasized that, the

youth who are the dictates of today's fashion and form the masses of the population have no taste for the complex and intricate designs of African prints with bright colours which, according to them, make their harmonies with other colours very difficult. For this reason they have reserved the prints for the elderly folks in the society with the notion that the designs and colours used in African prints are suitable for the matured class. Observable findings from the general public revealed that, most of the youth occasionally wear African print especially during funerals as obligation to grace the occasion but retreat from its use thereafter.

In view of this, the local textile factories have resorted to designs that meet the consumer taste and preference. New range of designs is being created season by season to attract consumers with little or no consideration of promoting Ghanaian cultural values. Even Textstyles Ghana Limited (Formerly GTP) who were noted for the production of classical print designs have devised strategies to produce designs to meet contemporary fashion trends with the aim of increasing patronage. The practice had led to the production of newer range of prints including "Nustyle" with its target group being the youth which is doing well on the market according to management. ATL and Printex are not left out in this direction as they have equally engaged in the development of novelty and assorted seasonal design ranges to stay in the competition within the African print market in the sub-region and beyond. Consequently, the new breed of designs ultimately makes aesthetics as a major priority for consumer attraction.

#### 3.4.2. Competitive Foreign Print Designs On The Ghanaian Market

Competitive print designs from offshore textile firms have been one of the major influences in design concepts of contemporary African prints. Most of such designs which usually come from Europe and Asia exhibit simple designs with attractive colours that are very appealing to most consumers as they offer a wider design application from casual to formal wear, compared to the classical symbolic print designs with limited application, which are mostly used for specific occasion. The study found that, local printing firms have move in line with foreign based design concepts to produce prints that offer wider design application to compete with their offshore counterparts like Vlisco and ABC. TGL, ATL and Pintex now produce designs that offer wider design possibilities for garment manufacturers. In the past, people hardly used the symbolic African print designs for casual wear considering their cultural implications and price value. However, with the introduction of simple abstracted and geometric patterns in

contemporary African print designs, their application has been widened and most youth now take delight in using the prints in designer wear by combing it with other plain materials.

#### 3.4.3. Dynamism In Modern Fashion

In the 1960s, Kaba and Slit was trendy and printed fabrics were design to suit such fashion style. Consumers knew nothing more than to project themselves in beautiful African printed design garment for most occasions. It was not until the introduction of liberal trade in the early 1980 that new variance of foreign textiles and garment styles trooped into the country to offer local consumers alternatives that demand for prints with wider application and design variance became a necessity. Since the fashion industry depends on the textile industry to operate, it is logic to establish that the types of print designs produced by the textile industry must satisfy the demand of the fashion industry. This is because the final product of the textile industry becomes a raw material for the fashion industry. The ever increasingly fast changing world has brought about lots of dynamisms in fashion and this cannot be overlooked by textile designers. Dynamism in modern fashion has led to a situation where local textile designers have redirected their focus from symbolic patterns which was trendy in the 1960s and best suited for the “Kaba and Slit” styles of the time to simple abstracted and harmonious design concepts in line with today’s fashion to meet the demand of wider consumers.

#### 3.4.4. Concerns For Design Utility

The degree to which a product meets the customer needs and wants largely depends on its utilitarian purpose. Utility in this context refers to the ability of the product to satisfy the customer’s needs or wants. The design of a printed textile must satisfy the principle of utility in order to attract wider customers. This is seen in four distinctive perspectives; form, time, place and possession (Osei-Bonsu, 2001). Form utility is the value created by shaping raw materials and other components into useful products. Time utility aims at making the products available at the time when the customers need them. Place utility focuses on the value of making the product available at the right places preferable by customers. Possession utility is the value that allows customers to utilize the product as they want.

Deducing from the above premises, it can be established that, the manufacturer cannot dictate for the consumers. Designers are obliged to take consumer needs and preference

into consideration in the designing process. This is the surest and only way that the product can receive high patronage. In this respect, it is the consumer not the designer who directs the design process and the outcomes. Although the designer has the power to alter or modify the result, he or she must work based on the design brief. Textile designing has therefore become a collaborative investigative activity involving both designers and clients due to high concerns for utilitarian needs of design in the textile and apparel industry. As a result, a lot of changes had occurred in the designing of African prints in the quest for satisfying design utilitarian purpose.

#### 3.4.5. Economic Concerns In Design

In order to reduce cost of production of printed textiles thereby making them affordably competitive amidst cheaper foreign textiles on the Ghanaian market, management and stakeholders of the industry are now concern about design in terms of cost effectiveness. With reference to the classical designs in Plates 1 to10, it is evident that most of the designs have an average of four colours and were mainly produced based on wax printing technology which make them much more expensive as each colour requires a separate roller, rotary screen or block. Traditionally, African prints have many bright and contrasting colours, which is typical of classical print designs. Unfortunately, the youth do not fancy such prints. The trend in the application of multiples of bright colours in African prints is now receiving serious consideration in the production process to reduce cost in order to make the prints affordable to all. New ranges of African print designs are now being developed with maximum of three colours including the background with a number of them exhibiting only two colours. This is in pursuance of economic concerns of design by local textile manufacturers to maximized profit. Application of colour harmonies has become the practice of most designers of African prints to attract the youth and also to widen the scope of application of the prints.

#### 3.4.6. Change In Production Methods

Production methods impose some limitations on the design outcome. For instance the design specifications in wax print differ from that of java and fancy prints. Accidental effects created in wax prints may not be desirable in designs that require uniform background colour. Depending on the nature of the design, a particular printing method may be employed in its production. The study unearthed that most of the classical African prints produced in the 1960s were manually made with Hand Block Printing

method which produces “misfits” as a result of human error that consumers used as a basis for distinguishing the real Hand Block prints from imitations. Although, hand block wax printing provides unique effects, the process is time consuming and labour intensive. However, with the advent of Rotary Screen Printing (RSP) technology whose speed cannot be compromised for Hand Block, domestic printing firms have resorted to the use of RSP for printing of African wax prints to increase productivity and to reduce cost. The local textile printing firms are gradually in the process of discarding their manual printing systems for automated systems for the same reasons. In view of this, designs are now developed for RSP; hence, certain characteristics which were typical in the classical designs such as “misfits” and “overlaps” are now not readily conspicuous in contemporary African prints.

#### 3.4.7. Target Market Diversity

African prints in the 1960s mainly targeted the elderly folks in the society. Most of the prints as indicated by Orhin (2007) were bought and kept for posterity due to the symbolic patterns and colours depicted in them. Arguably, there was not much competition in the market for the prints and for that matter demand was high. The situation is different today where there is a keen competition in today’s African print market and therefore targeting only the elderly in the society is tantamount to a risk venture. The market for the prints is now diversified to the extent that no clearly defined lines can be drawn as to who and of what age, tribe, occasion, religion, country, etc., patronise the prints as the market is now made up of a mixture of all classes of people with diverse design needs. The need to reach wider consumers in this situation has therefore led to diversity of designs by local textile printing firms for African prints. For this reason, designers no longer rely on traditional design concept which is fully rooted in symbolism of motifs and colours. They now go all out to create various kinds of designs, be it abstract, geometric, accidental, etc., provided what they produce will meet consumer satisfaction and needs.

#### **4. Conclusion**

Evidence of the study reveals a completely new design pattern for contemporary African prints compared to what used to be popular in the 1960s and 1970s. Change in people’s perception about clothing has led to change in African print designs; hence, prints designs that used to be accorded as highly prestigious and aesthetically pleasing cannot

be accorded the same value in the contemporary world. Symbolism has gradually given way to aesthetics and abstraction now dominates the patterns in African prints due to proliferation and adaptation of foreign design concepts as this seems to attract more consumers than that with symbolic patterns. The question, however is, must the quest for change in the global world discard one's valuable and prestigious cultural heritage? Are we to allow foreign design ideologies to dictate what is ideal for us on the detriment of our traditional design philosophies which need to be preserved for the generation to come? To the industrialist whose main concern is to produce commercially viable designs to make profit, his best option will be to move in accordance with what is in vogue in order to maximum profit. To the cultural anthropologist, the preservation of cultural heritage is of paramount significance to him or her.

Apparently, the two issues seem to carry equal concerns and for that matter necessitate a strategic design approach to address the situation. An integration of aesthetics and symbolism in African print designs is highly recommended to meet consumer preference and for preservation of Ghanaian cultural heritage. This will require frequent search for new designs through market survey and studio experimentation. "Documentary" design concept, exemplified by Yates (1996) that allows the designer to create from historical designs, can be adopted to work out symbolic patterns with enhanced aesthetic qualities to attract both the elderly and the youth.

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