Consumers' Preference and Further Uses of Kente Cloth

Afua Pokua Antwi[1]   Chen Bin[1]   Akyene Tetteh[2]   Michael Adashie[3]

1.Fashion and Art Design Institute, Donghua University, 1882 Yan'an Road West, Shanghai, 200051 P. R. China

2.Glorious Sun School of Business & Management, Donghua University, 1882 Yan'an Road West, Shanghai, 200051 P. R. China

3. Fine Art, Painting & Sculpture Department, KNUST, PMB, University Post Office, Kumasi, Ghana

Abstract

Kente the pride of Ghana traditional clothing, very colorful, its patterns full of Ghanaian traditional proverbs and hand woven cloth. Recently, its traditional usage is paving way for kente appropriation products in Ghana. This paper delves into consumers' preference of kente appropriation cloth and further uses of kente cloth. Questionnaires were used to gather the consumers' preference information, analyzed statistically using SPSS and TOPSIS was used to rank consumers' preference of kente appropriate cloths. The results suggest that: (i) consumers' preference for kente appropriate products (dress, shirts, bags, shoes) are growing steadily, (ii) there are infinite room for further development of kente cloth, (iii) teachers, government officials, local seamstresses, kente weavers should collaborate to educate Ghanaian and the world on kente history, draft and designs, and (iv) kente weavers should not neglect kente characteristics when weaving kente cloths.

Keywords: Kente Cloth, Ghana, Consumer Preference, TOPSIS

1. Introduction

Kente is a well-known woven cloth in Ghana with over two thousand years of history, between 1990 and 1991 kente cloth exported to America earned Ghana $14billion in foreign exchange (Quarcoopome 1998). The colorful nature of kente cloth symbolizes royalty, wealth, political authority or rank, knowledge in society and was used as currency during the Trans African Trade (Kraamer 2006a, 2006b, Ross 2004). The patterns in kente cloths are mostly associated with Ghanaian traditional proverbs: for example during Ghana's independence declaration the patterns in the kente cloth worn by President Dr. Kwame Nkrumah's mean *Adwinasa* "My Ideas are finished" which further means "I have done my best to give a master motif" and in 1960 Nkrumah presented the United Nations with a kente cloth whose pattern invoked the appropriate proverb "One head cannot go into Council."

Crossman's (2011) paper on art of kente history, designs and drafts focused on kente as a traditional ceremonial strip-woven cloth made by the Ashanti and Ewe people of Ghana. His analysis encompasses of kente cloths general design elements, history, patterns, weaving information, illustrations and color photography necessary to understand its traditional meaning. Kraamer's (2006a) paper on the other hand focused on the different threads use to weave stoles with specific Christian connotation to design kente patterns. He found that the development of weaving letters into kente cloth started in the Ewe speaking area of Ghana and the culture of politics of several Christian churches in Ghana as well as strategies to retain members' influences on kente pattern incorporation in Ghana.

Ross & Adu-Agyem (2008) article looked at the evolving art of Ashanti kente weaving in Ghana and suggested that men were afraid that if women join the kente weaving industry they will lose their daily earnings, women will abandon their traditional chores, the intensity of weaving kente cloth will render women barren and women stand a better chance of creating enticing design since Ghanaian women are well acknowledge of their artistic prowess. Evidently it can be said that they were looking at this age old tradition centuries old from the perspective of the contemporary Ghanaian space. This is problematic because issues of feminism as we know it and have adapted encased from western ideology did not exist then. History shows that the woman had independence and had authority to influence thoughts in the then space bearing in mind that Ashanti society was not patrilineal but rather matrilineal. Gott's (2009) paper touched on how Ashanti women display their wealth by wearing kente cloth. He explored the relationship between flamboyant fashionable behavior of women and the long-established Ashanti cultural practice involving both visual and verbal assertion of superior status. He found that fashionable dress developed from kente cloths into a particular female mode of high-status display provide visible proof of a Ashanti woman's success in accumulating prestigious wealth in life. Magee's (2005) article on *forever kente* addresses the gap of Barbie consumption in the world and concluded that Ghanaian Barbie kente costuming does not allow easy imagination of the kente cloth future where cultural differences are feared and are fully embraced by Ghanaians.

Kente weavers nowadays do create contemporary appropriation of Western styles and incorporate them into their Kente stoles to attract the youth and foreign consumers of the kente textile. (Kraamer 2006a, Crosman 2011). Besides, local seamstresses also in Ghana are using the kente cloth to design fashionable cloth (bags,

shoes, dresses, belts etc.) with other materials to improve their sales (Fianu & Zentey 2000). This paper focuses on consumers' preference for kente appropriate products and further uses of kente cloth in Ghana. The aims of the paper is address by using questionnaires to gather information, SPSS to statistically analyze the information and TOPSIS to rank consumers' preference for appropriated Kente cloth products (dresses, shoes, belts, bags, etc.). The results indicate that historical modification of kente cloth origination should be given the needed attention by Ghanaians, the traditional uses of kente cloth is gradually disappearing paving way for kente appropriation products, and kente cloth weavers should pay ultimate attention to kente characteristics during weaving. Consumers' preference for kente cloth appropriation dresses is growing and kente cloth can be used for unlimited innovative appropriation products like cushion covers, curtains, socks, wallet etc. The rest of the paper is organized as follows section two touches on the methodology and section three deals with results and discussion. Section four concludes with the findings, future research and limitation of the paper.

2. Methodology

2.1 Questionnaire
The questionnaire administered to participants is made up of thirteen questions (refer to appendix), subdivided into three parts. The first part (questions 1-5) unearths participant general knowledge about kente cloths (i.e. kente cloth users, origination, characteristics, basic idea and how participants were introduced to kente cloth). The second part (questions 6-10) delves into kente appropriation designs with other materials, participant favorites and how local seamstresses, government and Ghanaians can help improve kente cloth products coverage and its future prospect in the world while part three (question 11-13) focus on socio-demography (gender, age and educational level) of participants. About 200 questionnaires were self-administered to participants only 120 (60%) were returned. Out of the 120, 101(84.2%) qualified for statistical and TOPSIS analysis and 19 (15.8%) were rejected because participant ticked two or more answers for one question and participant did not complete the entire question on the questionnaire. Each question answered were coded (example, question 2 was coded 1, 2, 3, 4 in no other of preference) and later used to draw a data matrix. Each questionnaire was treated us such for further analysis using SPSS and TOPSIS.

2.2 Statistical Analysis
All the data was expressed as the mean, standard deviation and internal consistency reliability (Cronbach Alpha (α)) score. An alpha coefficient of 0.7 or higher was considered reliable (Cronbach 1951). A validity test was confirmed using Pearson's correlation coefficient to determine the correlation between the sub-division of the questionnaire. Besides, discriminant validity was assed and compared with one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) and the Tukey post hoc test. All the statistical procedures were performed using SPSS version 19.0.0 with p-value less than or equal to 0.10 considered statistically significant.

2.3 Technique for Order Preference by Similarity to Ideal Solution Method (TOPSIS)
TOPSIS was mainly used to rank consumers' preference for kente cloth appropriated products aiming at ways to improving and developing kente cloths beyond the shores of Ghana. TOPSIS was initially developed by Hwang & Yoon (1981) to determine the best alternatives by minimizing the distance to the ideal solution and maximizing the distance to the negative-ideal solution with all alternative solutions ranked according to their closeness to the ideal solution. Generally TOPSIS comprise six steps listed below (Tetteh 2012):

Step 1
Calculate the normalized decision matrix A. The normalized value a_{ij} is calculated as;

$$a_{ij} = x_{ij} / \sqrt{\sum_{i=1}^{m} (x_{ij})^2} \qquad (1 \leq i \leq m, 1 \leq j \leq n) \qquad (1)$$

Step 2
Calculate the weighted normalized decision matrix

$$V = (a_{ij} * w_j) \qquad (1 \leq i \leq m, 1 \leq n) \qquad (2)$$

Where w_j is the weight of the *ith* criterion, w_j is apportioned equally using the straight line weight method and $\sum_{i=1}^{n} w_j = 1$

Step 3
Calculate the ideal solution V^* and the negative ideal solution V^-

$$V^+ = \{v_1^*, \quad v_2^*, \quad \cdots, \quad v_n^*\} = \{(Max \quad v_{ij} | j \in J), (Min \quad v_{ij} | j \in J)\}$$
$$V^- = \{v_1^-, \quad v_2^-, \quad \cdots, \quad v_n^-\} = \{(Min \quad v_{ij} | j \in J), (Max \quad v_{ij} | j \in J)\} \quad (3)$$

Step 4
Calculate the separation measures, using the m-dimensional Euclidean distance

$$S_i^+ = \sqrt{\sum_{j=1}^{n}(V_{ij} - V^*)^2} \quad (1 \le i \le m, 1 \le j \le n)$$

$$S_i^- = \sqrt{\sum_{j=1}^{n}(V_{ij} - V^-)^2} \quad (1 \le i \le m, 1 \le j \le n) \quad (4)$$

Step 5
Calculate the relative closeness to the ideal solution

$$Y_i = \frac{S_i^-}{S_i^+ + S_i^-} \quad (1 \le i \le m) \quad (5)$$

Where $Y_i \in (0,1)$. The larger Y_i is, the closer the alternative is to the ideal solution.

Step 6
The larger the TOPSIS value, the better the alternative.

3. Result and Discussion

3.1 Result
The mean and standard deviation of each question ranges from 1.06 (Basic Knowledge of Kente) to 3.19 (Educational Level of Participants) and 0.238 (Basic Knowledge of Kente) to 1.588 (Color of Kente) respectively. Cronbach's alpha coefficient reliability test for all the questions are greater than 0.70 with color of Kente recording the lowest 0.719 and educational level of participant and other uses of Kente registering the highest value of 0.772 as shown in Table 1. Table 2 further analyze the pairwise mean comparison between questions using one-way variance of analysis (ANOVA) with Tukey's post hoc test. The F-statistics pairwise test between questions was 54.345 and that of the residual were 31.56 both are statistical significant at 95% confidence level with a p = 0.000.

TOPSIS analysis result of consumers' preference of kente appropriated products is reported in Table 3 with the highest rank product being dress (0.58057) and the least rank being other uses (0.369096). Table 4 presents the inter-questions correlation matrix. Three interesting short run result were registered that is positive, negative and non – correlation: low negative correlation –0.365 (innovative improvement of kente and educational level of participants), high negative correlation – 0.002 (between basic knowledge of kente and cost of buying kente Cloth), non-correlation 0.000 between (i) kente users and other uses of kente and (ii) color of kente cloth and shoes, low positive correlation 0.002 (between basic knowledge of kente and introduction to kente), and the highest positive correlation 0.817 (between color of kente and weaving quality of kente).

Table 1: Questions Statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Cronbach's Alpha
Basic Knowledge	1.06	0.238	0.760
Introduction to Kente	2.16	1.302	0.762
Kente Origination	1.45	1.100	0.750
Kente User	1.93	1.416	0.756
Color of Kente	2.20	1.588	0.719
Weight	2.83	1.304	0.730
Weaving Quality	2.50	1.419	0.726
Sewing Quality	2.66	1.211	0.731
Cost	3.18	1.228	0.748
Production Rate	3.26	1.180	0.758
Innovation	1.22	0.415	0.755
Shoes	2.95	1.374	0.760
Shirts	2.73	1.441	0.736
Dress	2.48	1.572	0.725
Bags	2.75	1.417	0.728
Belts	3.39	1.371	0.754
Others	3.85	1.499	0.772
Innovation Improvement	1.32	0.468	0.758
Kente Future Prospects	1.33	0.471	0.761
Gender	1.37	0.484	0.765
Age	2.29	0.864	0.765
Education	3.19	0.821	0.772

Table 2: ANOVA with Tukey's Test

			Sum of Squares	Degree of Freedom	Mean Square	F-Sta.	p - Value
Within Questions	Between Questions		1379.602	21	65.695	54.345	0.000
	Residual	Non additive	37.364[a]	1	37.364	31.356	0.000

Table 3: TOPSIS Ranking Result

	S_i^+	S_i^-	Y_i	Ranking
Shoes	0.122079	0.126268	0.508434	**4**
Shirts	0.121471	0.144887	0.543956	**2**
Dress	0.122391	0.169055	0.580057	**1**
Bags	0.121219	0.142987	0.541194	**3**
Belts	0.125484	0.096475	0.434652	**5**
Others	0.129859	0.075971	0.369096	**6**

Table 4: Inter-Questions Correlation Matrix

	Basic Knowled	Introduc. to Kente	Kente Origina	Kente User	Colorful	Weight	Weaving Quality	Sewing Quality	Cost	Produc. Rate	Innova.	Shoes	Shirts	Dress	Bags	Belts	Others	Innova. Improve	Kente F. Prospe.	Gender	Age	Educa.
Basic Knowled	1.000																					
Introduc to Kente	0.002	1.000																				
Kente Origina	0.051	0.076	1.000																			
Kente User	0.042	-0.054	0.264*	1.000																		
Colorful	0.101◊	0.260*	0.190♠	0.149◊	1.000																	
Weight	-0.032	0.175♠	0.143◊	0.259*	0.630*	1.000																
Weaving Quality	0.058	0.303*	0.136◊	0.107◊	0.817*	0.565*	1.000															
Sewing Quality	0.070	0.167♠	0.234*	0.091◊	0.706*	0.546*	0.688*	1.000														
Cost	-0.002	0.038	0.096◊	0.036	0.449*	0.537*	0.424*	0.438*	1.000													
Product Rate	0.016	0.032	0.211♠	0.208♠	0.159◊	0.262◊	0.202♠	0.285*	0.444*	1.000												
Innova	0.070	0.047	0.245*	0.094◊	0.298*	0.161♠	0.287*	0.347*	0.002	-0.014	1.000											
Shoes	0.040	-0.102◊	0.180♠	0.075	0.000Δ	-0.005	-0.131◊	-0.100◊	-0.226♠	-0.202♠	0.212♠	1.000										
Shirts	0.018	0.044	0.051	0.118◊	0.364*	0.263♠	0.341*	0.320*	0.163♠	-0.135◊	0.232♠	0.266*	1.000									
Dress	0.138◊	0.354*	0.142◊	0.114◊	0.655*	0.429*	0.631*	0.447*	0.215♠	0.100◊	0.254*	0.034	0.516*	1.000								
Bags	0.193♠	0.206♠	0.181♠	0.166♠	0.453*	0.296♠	0.416*	0.347*	0.083	0.021	0.110◊	0.271*	0.457*	0.556*	1.000							
Belts	-0.010	-0.186♠	0.150◊	0.148◊	-0.058	0.126◊	-0.112◊	0.013	-0.012	0.018	0.079	0.568*	0.260♠	0.035	0.338*	1.000						
Others	-0.003	-0.065	0.144◊	0.000Δ	-0.240*	-0.064	0.163♠	-0.055	-0.018	0.084	-0.012	0.365*	0.060	-0.135◊	0.119◊	0.481*	1.000					
Innova Improve	-0.081	0.196♠	0.326*	0.109◊	0.157◊	0.056	0.163♠	0.155◊	0.005	-0.041	0.105◊	0.040	0.171♠	0.201♠	0.029	-0.037	-0.118◊	1.000				
Kente F Prospe	0.182♠	0.110◊	0.218◊	0.034	0.046	-0.007	0.005	0.002	-0.033	-0.081	0.042	0.133◊	0.086	0.153◊	-0.012	-0.104◊	-0.086	0.615*	1.000			
Gender	-0.104♠	-0.188♠	-0.047	-0.108◊	-0.095◊	-0.091◊	-0.141◊	-0.129◊	0.074	-0.079	0.047	0.103◊	0.070	-0.034	-0.071	0.056	0.158◊	-0.032	-0.092	1.000		
Age	0.160◊	-0.139◊	0.085	0.188♠	-0.035	-0.081	-0.095◊	-0.107◊	-0.134◊	-0.073	0.131◊	0.240*	-0.034	-0.079	0.059	0.243*	0.126◊	-0.252*	-0.23*3	-0.039	1.000	
Education	0.096◊	-0.168♠	-0.271*	0.020	-0.159◊	-0.101◊	-0.031	-0.187♠	-0.014	-0.009	-0.210◊	-0.054	0.136◊	-0.194♠	-0.046	0.041	0.015	-0.365*	-0.264*	-0.100◊	0.135◊	1.000

Legends: ◊ *Significant at 0.10 level*, ♠ *Significant at 0.05 level*, * *Significant at 0.01 level*, Δ *No Correlation*

3.2 Discussions

The data collected for the analysis was reliable in determining consumers' preference and further uses of the kente cloth. Reliability in terms of freedom from random error was demonstrated by a little high degree of internal consistency according to Cronbach's α value. All the alpha values exceed 0.70. The studies found that participants were well knowledgeable about kente cloth. They were mainly introduced to kente cloth by their parent, teacher and the media but were confused about it true region of origin. Kente cloth originates from Volta regional part of Ghana. Kente cloth daily usage, biggest weaving city (Bonwire) and rich culture in Ashanti region made participants think Ashanti region is the region of origin. This calls for a historical correction in Ghana's history books. Kente cloth usage by chiefs is gradually changing making way for kente appropriation products.

Furthermore, the study establish that the kente cloth is very colorful suitable for all occasion but very weighty. The weighty nature can be traced to the threads used to weave them particularly ones using cotton yarns followed by synthetic fiber yarns, polyester and nylon that mimic silk. The use of silk fiber yarns were previously preferred and highly prized and price. Although textiles companies have tried to print kente cloths on other materials its quality looks much inferior compared to the one woven, this calls for further studies and research into kente cloth weighty reduction. In fact with the advent of computerized looms it should make it possible for a study to create a mathematical iteration coded into and use of computer graphics for kente patterns/designs to be woven on reengineered industrial weaving machines. Participant agreed that the weaving quality of kente cloth is of high class and weavers should pay more attention when sewing the kente stips together. In term of the cost of purchasing and producing kente cloth participants were of the view that it's very moderate. Meaning all Ghanaians can afford kente cloth if produced in large quantities. If kente weavers can increase their production rate, their sales will improve which may further boost their business since demand of kente cloth does out strip its supply.

Besides, the inter-questions correlations matrix produced interesting results. The first section of the question that unearth participants general knowledge about kente cloth suggest that basic knowledge about kente, introduction to kente and kente origination correlation is positive but very weak. That of kente users has a strong positive correlation with kente origination. Kente characteristics (color, weight, weaving quality, sewing quality, cost and production rate) registered a very high positive correlation with each characteristic at p value of 0.05 and 0.01. It can be deduced that any inferior (quality) characteristics on a kente cloth affects all the other characteristics and weavers should not overlook kente cloth characteristics.

Also the second section of the questions studies consumers' preferences and the kente cloths future prospects. The correlation results were negative but at the same time showed highly positive ones. For innovative products (shoes, shirts, dress, bags, belts and other) the correlation values were positively significant at p = 0.05, and p = 0.01 with the exception of shoes and dress, dress and belts and shirt and other significant at p = 0.25. Innovative improvement of kente appropriation cloths was positively correlated with kente future prospects. The results suggest that if local seamstresses in Ghana can design exquisite kente appropriated products they may improve their daily sales and survive locally and internationally in the fashion industry. Which further mean kente innovative products have a very bright future.

The last section of the question which focus on socio-demographics of participants recorded a correlation value significant at p = 0.10 and above. The studies found that with these helping structures well established kente cloth can go beyond the Ghanaian boundary: (i) The common and first point of call is that (1) government providing necessary incentives for kente wavers (example free duty on import and export product like machines, threads, and kente accessories, financial assistance with less interest rate, cheap electricity to facilitate non-stop production), (2) strict laws that ban fake Kente cloth production, and (3) government officials especially the Minister of Tourism acting as Kente cloth ambassador. (ii) intensive advertisement of kente cloth should be embark on in Ghana and aboard to educate consumers' about its history, designs and drafts, and (iii) moderate pricing of kente cloth products.

Whiles these points are helpful the philosophy underlying this school of thought has been a colonial one. For far too long this has stifled individual entrepreneurship. It is now time for individual or groups i.e. the private sector of the economy to boldly take up these goals and responsibilities by themselves independent of Government sponsorship. This will bring the boom in production and value on the international market as other private corporations are doing in well-known industrial countries. Such small and medium enterprises (SME's) can then set and control standards as well as the trade flow of the kente cloth since they will then become an authority in the business of the kente trade. A business belonging to the people by the people the profits will come directly to them. Whiles the government benefit through the tax regimes it may impose to drive the sector. Other private entities also benefit by becoming suppliers of machinery, the cotton farmers also get market for their produce, the fashion industry with its attendant accessory industries etc. Most of all the private sector will provide jobs too.

Finally, the TOPSIS analysis was used to rank consumer preference for Kente innovative products. The

results indicate that Ghanaians patronizes Kente innovative products very much. The rank follows this order dress, shirt, bags, shoes, belts and others. The percentage for the most rank innovative product dress is 58.0057% suggesting that 41.9943% requires further improvement (example finished touches, embellishments, well-structured dresses) to increase its patronage. The same can be said about shirt, bags, shoes, and belts. That notwithstanding, the last ranking of kente innovative products the "others" suggest that kente cloth has not been much explored (example cufflinks, caps, ear rings, pants, socks, etc.) by local seamstresses. This confirms that kente cloths innovative products are in its infant stages and well carefully crafted innovative products can expand local seamstress future profit.

4. Conclusion

The rich culture of Kente cloth has been kept for centuries and its traditional use by chiefs is shifting to the everyday person who uses innovative products by local seamstresses. The innovative products of kente cloth is in its infantile stage as this paper has shown through the study of consumers' preference of kente innovative products and further uses of kente cloth. Questionnaires were self-administered to participants and the data gathered was further analyzed using SPSS statistical tool and TOPSIS to rank consumers' kente cloth preferences. The research for the statistical result revealed that a historical correction of kente cloth origination should be given maximum attention by all and gradually kente cloths traditional use may disappear in the near future paving way for innovation kente products. Beside these further studies can be conducted into how to reduce kente cloth weights and kente cloth weavers should not take for granted or overlook the kente's characteristics during weaving. Local seamstresses may break through international markets if they cultivate the habit of designing exquisite innovative kente products and developing good marketing and entrepreneurial skills as well as boldly collaborating with other interest groups in the textile industry. The TOPSIS result indicates that consumers' prefer dresses made from kente cloth but desire for other innovative products. Further, local seamstresses can locate themselves and compete on the international fashion stage if they can develop new and exciting innovative products with kente cloth especially experimenting with new fibers that can help the kente compete successfully at economical prices on the international market.

The first limitation of this study may be traced to the sample size; even though the sample size analyzed may be statistically significant a larger sample size may produce further interesting results. Secondly literature in this field is not yet rich enough resulting in making this a critical study that would serve to help future research in this field. Thirdly certain features of kente cloth and innovative products in the market were overlooked in this study (example materials use for making kente cloth, curtains, cushion covers etc.) further research can be conducted on that. Finally further study should research on the correlation between kente cloth users and other uses of kente and color of kente cloth and shoes.

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Appendix

This questionnaire is intended for academic purpose only and all information provided would be kept private and anonymous. Answer each question by circling or ticking one answer for each question. Thank you for participating in this study.

Q1. Do you have any knowledge about Kente cloth?
- □ Yes
- □ No

Q2. Who introduce you to Kente cloth?
- □ Parents
- □ Friends
- □ Teacher
- □ Media

Q3. Where do you think Kente cloth originates from in Ghana?
- □ Ashanti Region
- □ Volta Region
- □ Both Ashanti and Volta Region
- □ Northern Region
- □ I don't know

Q4. Which class of people most often wears the Kente cloth?
- □ Chiefs
- □ Presidents
- □ Teachers
- □ Everybody
- □ I don't know

Q5. How would you rate the characteristics (features) of Kente cloth?
In terms of 1 – 5 scale: 1= Excellent, 2= Very Good, 3 = Good, 4= Satisfactory, 5 = Poor.

Characteristics (Features)	1	2	3	4	5
1. Color					
2. Weight					
3. Weaving Quality					
4. Sewing Quality					
5. Cost					
6. Production Rate					

Q6. In recent times do you like the innovative ways local seamstresses have incorporated Kente cloth into their design products?
- □ Yes
- □ No

Q7. Which of such Kente incorporated products interest you most?
In terms of 1 – 5 scale: 1= Excellent, 2= Very Good, 3 = Good, 4= Satisfactory, 5 = Poor.

Innovative Incorporated products	1	2	3	4	5
1. Shoes					
2. Shirts					
3. Dress					
4. Bags					
5. Belts					
6. Other Products					

Q8. Can Kente incorporated products be improved?
- □   Yes
- □   No

Q9. Does Kente cloth have any future breakthrough?
- □   Yes
- □   No

Q10. If your answer to question 9 is YES, can you suggest ways to achieve the breakthrough?

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……………………………………………………………………………………………………

Q11. Gender
- □   Male
- □   Female

Q12. Age
- □   < 20
- □   21 – 30
- □   31 – 40
- □   41 – 50
- □   > 50

Q13. Highest educational level
- □   Junior High School (JHS)
- □   Senior High School (SHS)
- □   Undergraduate (Degree Holder)
- □   Post Graduate (Master and PhD Holder)