

Ripple Effect of a Vibrant Fashion Industry on Graduate Unemployment

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Abstract

A vibrant Fashion Industry has the propensity of accommodating a huge workforce, employing everyone from design, illustration, graphic communication, marketing logistics, media, and consultancy among others. All these related industries play a major role to bring fashion products to the doorsteps of the final consumer. Although the Fashion Industry have the capacity to absorb a number of graduates, unemployment rate is expeditiously assuming an alarming proportion in Ghana as annually, a new batch of university and polytechnic graduates feed into the existing unemployed group. The study sought to investigate the potential effect of a vibrant fashion industry in alleviating graduate unemployment in Ghana. The importance of this work is to bridge the gap between unemployed skillfully trained manpower and the huge potential market for dynamic fashion products that is ever increasing with population growth to create value chain employment towards the growth of the economy. Further research should be done to identify additional institutions that are required to collaborate and strengthen the existing ones, modern machinery and advertisement to revamp the Ghanaian fashion industry. As a qualitative enquiry, the study employs descriptive research approach making use of interview as data gathering tool. The study establishes that Fashion Industry in Ghana cannot be described as vibrant because it lacks essential components that qualify a fashion industry as vibrant. These components are; automation in garment productions, professional fashion designers, fashion institutions equipped with ultra-modern facilities for teaching and learning and market research institutions among others. The study is will help to position the country on the global fashion platform; this will attract more tourists into the country and that will lead to expansion of the revenue base of the economy. Again the creation of jobs along the value chain from design, production, advertisement to marketing will help to reduce graduate unemployment in the country. The study recommends a link between academia, industry and government in order to help revamp the industry in order to create numerous employment avenues along the value chain.

Keywords: Ripple effect, Vibrant Fashion Industry, Graduate, Unemployment

1. Introduction

The fashion industry is a global industry, where fashion designers, manufacturers, merchandisers, and retailers from all over the world collaborate to design, manufacture, and sell clothing, shoes, and accessories. Throughout history, fashion has greatly influenced the “fabric” of societies all over the world. What people wear often characterizes who they are and what they do for a living. As Mark Twain once wrote, “Clothes make the man. Naked people have little or no influence on society.” (Tools & Releases, 2012)

In the 21st century, the fashion industry is becoming increasingly important component of industrial based economies and whoever thought that fashion is not a serious business ought to rethink. Countries that have made significant strides in development over the past years had to depend largely on their human resource, of which graduates played a preponderance role. According to the findings of a landmark report launched during London Fashion Week (Fox & Guardian, 2010), British fashion is not just about designer frocks; it is a serious business that contributes almost £21bn to the UK economy. This significant contribution of fashion industry to the economy comprises wholesale, retail and manufacturing that has direct effect on other industries including financial services and tourism. Economic consultants Oxford Economics, says the UK fashion industry is the largest employer of all the creative industries, directly employing 816,000 people. Paula Reed, style director at Grazia magazine, said: "For a long time people have underestimated fashion in terms of its importance to the wealth of the nation. The general attitude often seems to be that working in fashion is not a real job – but it is in fact lots of people's 'real jobs'." The report notes that the London Fashion Week helps to build British fashion as a brand abroad, which in turn has an impact on tourism, attracting visitors to the UK to shop or visit fashion

exhibitions. A minimum estimate puts this tourism impact at a value of £98m in 2009. This brings to light the ripple effect of a vibrant fashion industry that generates chain of employment from designers, manufacturers, fashion show organizers, photography you name them.

The same cannot be said of Ghana today because there are not enough jobs for the graduate to bring his or her expertise on board. There were over 40 Textiles and garment manufacturing firms in 1977 (report by the Institute of Statistical, Social and Economic Research, Legon) that provided employment for about 2500 workers; that account for 27% of the total manufacturing employment. Today Ghana has only four large textiles firms, and they are Ghana Textile Print (GTP), Akosombo Textile Limited (ATL), Ghana Textiles Manufacturing Company (GTMC), and Printex. These four companies are unstable in terms of their production because production capacity has been reduced drastically over the years (Quartey & Abor, 2011 as cited by Atiemo 2014). The devastating effect of this persistent downward trend by way of the collapse of about 90% of the textiles and garment firms accounts for the increasing rate of unemployment for high and middle level trained manpower. In contrast between 2004 and 2008 Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology alone has produced 506 textile graduates (Maneison 2013) with slightly higher figures from the polytechnics. The downward trend in employment avenues against the upsurge in trained high and middle level manpower spells doom for us as a nation since this will end up in brain drain.

Industrial development has been recognized as one of the surest means of ensuring higher and sustained growth rates. Hence African countries including Ghana pursued industrialization in the 1960s and 1970s. As indicated by Quartey (2006) the rationale was to move Africa economies from its agrarian state to modern industrialized economies, as has been the case of the East and South-East Asian economies.

Statistical Service Ghana (Contributing, 2010) report indicates that economic activity status of persons 15 years and older nationwide was 15,208,425 with 20% in Ashanti Region, 18% in Greater Accra, 11% in Eastern Region, 9% in Central, Western, Brong Ahafo, Northern Regions, 8% in Volta Region, 4% in Upper East Region and 3% in Upper West Region (Figs. 1, 2 and 3).

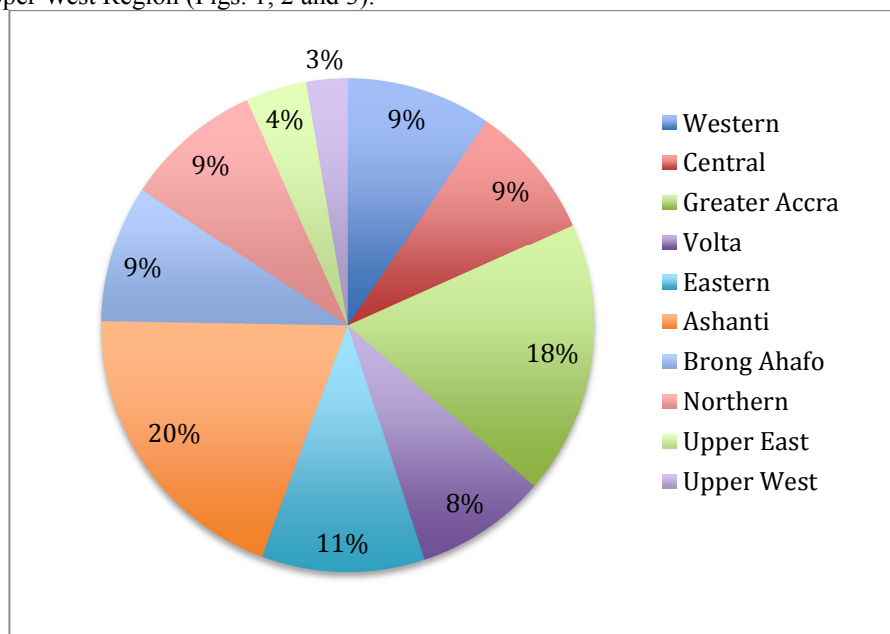


Figure 1. Percentage of employable youth in the Regions

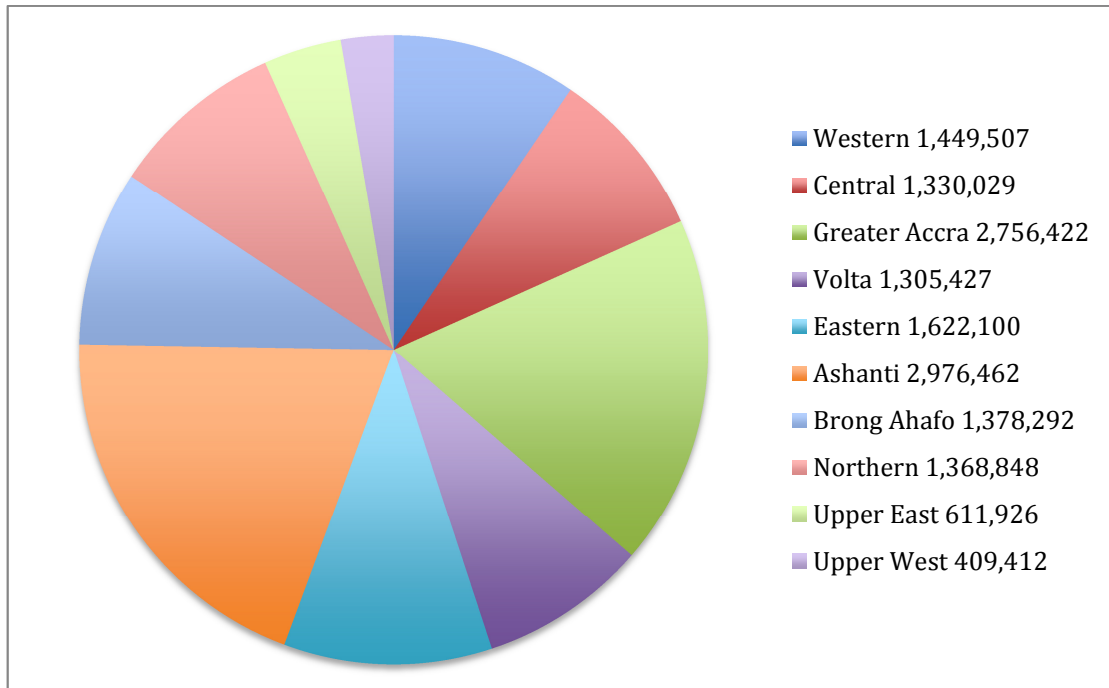


Figure 2. Employable youth in the Regions

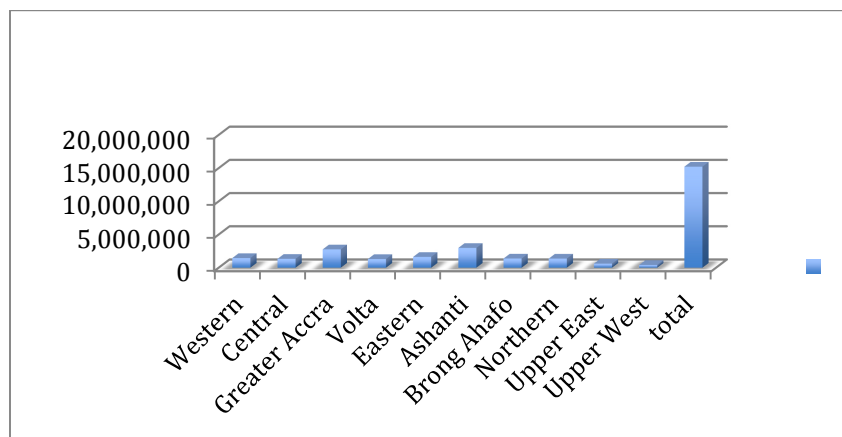


Figure 3. Total employable youth in Ghana

The report further revealed that 632,994 that 4% out of the 15,208,425 were unemployed with chart 4 and 5 showing the figures and percentages across the Regions respectively. The last census in 2000 counts a total population of 18.9 million people; however, the current total population is estimated as large as 24.4 million. Ghana has experienced continuous population growth, with an average annual growth rate of 2.5 % over the past 30 years.

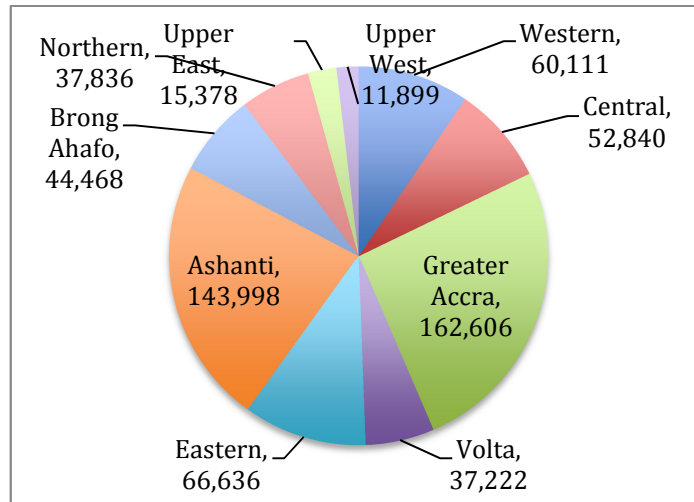


Figure 4. Unemployed youth in the Regions

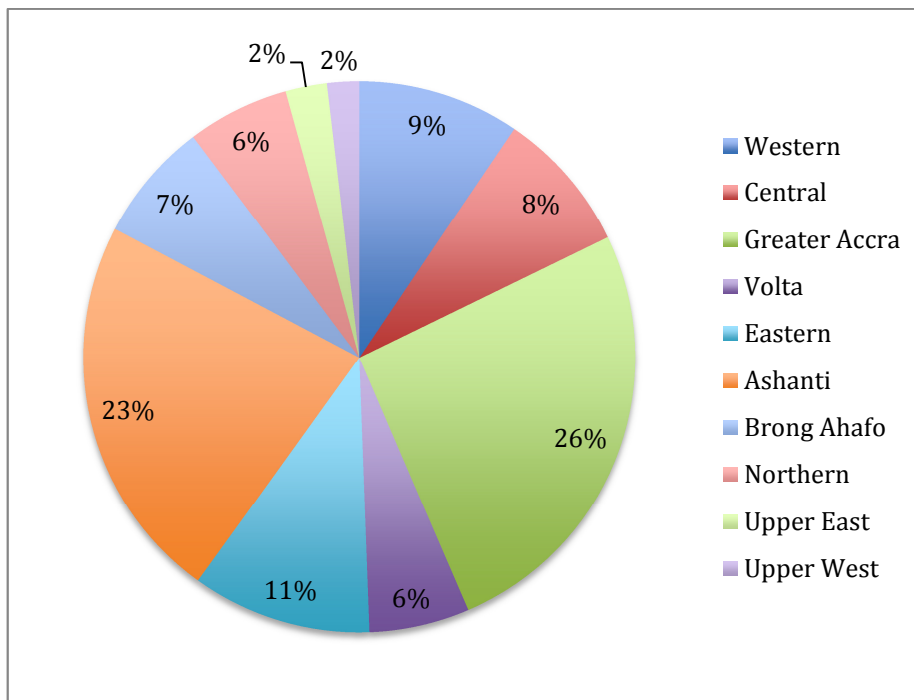


Figure 5. Percentage of unemployed youth in the Regions

However it is imperative to note that with the high rate of population growth the percentage of unemployed youth over the last four years would have increased. The situation will be no different if not worse in other developing countries. As part of the solution to curb the rate of unemployment developing countries can take a clue from the examples cited in United Kingdom and America to develop the right structures for a vibrant fashion industry that has the potential of ripple effect along the value chain to create numerous job opportunities for the youth.

The development of Western Europe in terms of urbanization and industrialization obviously provided an ideal setting for fashion. Town life and development of large industrial cities increased the reliance of dress in social interactions as social relations became more heterogeneous. It is believed that industrialization not only increased the source of available wealth and the contribution of the growing complexity in the stratification of society. It also led to the mass production of clothes and made fashion more widely available.

2. The Fashion Industry

The fashion industry is a product of the modern age. The industry is one of the industries often labelled ‘**cultural industries**’. Lately this group 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. Brennkmeier (1962) postulates, “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 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.

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 the its ‘spill over’ effects ranging from IT to tourism puts fashions total contribution at £37bn. Fashion contributes to about 2.8% of total employment in the UK. Its direct and indirect contribution to UK 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.

2.1 Vibrant Fashion Industry

Rouse (1993) 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, journalist 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.

2.2 Overview Of The Fashion Industry In Ghana

The Ghanaian Garment Sector consisted of small-scale dressmakers established as one person business (Ampofo, 2011). He asserts that in1979 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 the vibrancy of the fashion industry in Ghana and how it could impact on graduate unemployment in Ghana.

3. Methodology

The study sought to understand people’s interpretations, thus, people’s perception of a vibrant fashion industry and the impact it would have on graduate unemployment in Ghana. As a result, qualitative enquiry was used, adopting the descriptive research approach and employed interview and observation as data gathering tools. In other to obtain factual information for analysis, the following research questions were used as a guide to obtain

relevant data.

- ❖ What is a vibrant fashion industry?
- ❖ What are the rudiments of a vibrant fashion industry?
- ❖ What effect would a vibrant fashion industry have on graduate unemployment?

The population for this study focused on fashion designers/dressmakers in the fashion business in Ghana and academia, (students and lectures) who have in - depth knowledge with regard to the fashion industry. Purposive sampling was used to collect primary data for the study. The population captures five astute fashion designers or dress makers in the fashion business in Accra and Kumasi, three lecturers, one from the Department of industrial Art (KNUST), one from the Department of Fashion and Textiles (Accra Polytechnic) and one from the Department of High Fashion (Kumasi Polytechnic). The views of seven students who study fashion or fashion related courses at Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Kumasi were also sampled. In all the views of fifteen people were sampled. This scope is believed to have all the characteristics that would facilitate the research in terms of knowledge and know how. During the interview, a video voice recorder was used to record proceedings while short notes were taken. The interview process also addressed observations that needed clarification. During each interview session, the researchers tried as much as possible to establish rapport with interviewees. This created an avenue for the free flow of the dialogue.

Series of interviews were conducted in Kumasi, Accra and Tema and some of the places visited include Nallem Clothing (Kokomlemlle), Accra polytechnic, and the premises of two astute and knowledgeable dress makers at Adabraka (Accra) and Tema Community Three. In Kumasi, interviews were conducted at Kumasi Polytechnic, Jenesis clothing (Ayeduase), Akaal clothing and Decor (Fumesua), Nok culture clothing (Bomso) and KNUST campus.

4. Results and Discussion

Data gathered from a field survey or through questionnaire or interview response may be meaningless in their raw state if not interpreted, especially when the sample size is large. This section therefore discusses findings obtained from interviews conducted in answering the objectives of the study which are as follows:

- ❖ To identify the rudiments of a vibrant fashion industry.
- ❖ To look at the feasibility of a vibrant fashion industry in Ghana and its implication on graduate unemployment in Ghana.

All respondents indicated that Ghana does not have a vibrant fashion industry. Majority of the respondents stressed that even though there are has been a lot of improvement in the fashion industry in Ghana, it cannot be said to be vibrant.

Eunice Antiaye, Head of department-Fashion and Textiles (Accra Polytechnic) described a vibrant fashion industry as one that has all its integral parts working effectively to boost production and sales. The views of other four respondents were in consonance with that of Eunice Antiaye. They perceived a vibrant fashion industry as an embodiment of various parts, each part playing its role effectively. This group of people were of the strong opinion that any industry devoid of certain key players such as professional designers, fashion retailers and merchandisers, fashion media, business experts and the like does not fit to be ranked as a vibrant fashion industry.

Sarah Anooson, Head of Department-High Fashion (Kumasi Polytechnic) perceives a vibrant fashion industry as one that is into mass production and has large labour force. Other three respondents were of the same opinion. For this section of the population, the yardstick for measuring a vibrant fashion is mass production. They argued that any vibrant fashion industry should be able to produce on a large scale and employ large workforce.

Another group, composed of three people considered a vibrant fashion industry as one which is seasonal and comes out with seasonal range of designs and showcase them through fashion shows. With this group, creativity and dynamism forms the benchmark for defining a vibrant fashion industry.

A Ghanaian born Italian based fashion designer, Attah Kofi considered professional fashion designers as the backbone of any vibrant fashion industry. In his opinion, fashion designers form the fulcrum around which any vibrant fashion industry revolves and that there will be no fashion industry without them. Majority of the respondents corroborated this assertion. He revealed that everything like models, modeling agencies, tailors, fashion photographers, fashion retailers, fashion magazines are built around them.

Larweh, a talented and experienced dress maker based in Adabraka (Accra) underscored the fact that a vibrant fashion industry should have able workforce with requisite modern skill and knowledge of production. He added that this will be possible in Ghana when fashion institutions in Ghana are equipped with ultra-modern facilities for teaching and learning. He also pointed out that this is where the fashion designers or potential ones enhance their design abilities and learn how to properly make a mark in the fashion industry and that is why a vibrant

fashion industry won't be complete without good fashion institutions.

There were those who contended that a major hallmark of a vibrant fashion industry is modern methods of production. They see automation in garment production as a necessary tool if any fashion industry is to make an impact in the world of fashion.

The stance of Margaret Bamfoh, a dress maker based in Tema Community Three was that a vibrant fashion industry should have business experts with acumen. Her assertion was based on the fact that there is a lot of dynamism at play in the 21st century fashion world such as consumer behavior, and that there is the need for any fashion industry to have proactive business personnel who will be able to demystify some of these dynamisms and come out with possible solutions to help meet the ever changing demand of fashion consumers.

With respect to the feasibility of a vibrant fashion industry in Ghana, all respondents reiterated that Ghana abounds in talents with regard to garment production which is a great sign that when equipped with sophisticated machinery and their skill upgraded, they can produce very good and standardized garments. Wenboleti Awaring-Ba, head of creativity-Nallem Clothing (Kokomlemlé-Accra) underlined the fact that Ghanaians are now fashion conscious or trendy as compared to some decades ago which is enough evidence that when the fashion industry is giving the necessary support and the enabling environment a vibrant fashion industry could be born in Ghana. He stressed that for any industry to thrive it has to be accepted and supported by its indigenes. Some of the respondents who are in the fashion business testified of how patronage of their products have improved over the years which is a sign that Ghanaians would patronize locally made garments if they are quality and of high standard.

With reference to the role branding plays in the fashion industry, Margaret Bamfoh, stated that in the competitive business environment where businesses are competing at a neck-breaking rate, branding is the magic wand that does the trick so to speak, but unfortunately most Ghanaian firms have not utilized this avenue. Majority of the respondents declared that branding makes products sell. Others too were of the view that branding creates a sense of satisfaction which makes consumers become attached to products and leads to customer loyalty.

Hawah Braimah of Akaal fashion and Decor (Fumesua-Kumasi) suggested that branding can create an impression in the minds of consumers which could be passed on to generation yet unborn thereby making a product popular and promoting sales. Looking at the benefits Ghana is likely to gain from a vibrant fashion industry, Wenboleti Awaring-Ba of Nallem clothing said that there are a lot of benefits a country could derive from a vibrant fashion industry, the immediate one being job creation. He views the fashion industry as a long chain and a great avenue for employment that can ensure poverty reduction and equip individuals with the ability to cater for themselves and their dependents. Some respondents saw the fashion industry as an industry with high export potential that can generate revenue and provides employment for Ghanaian youth. Others also considered the industry as a platform that can be used to promote tourism and Ghanaian culture through fashion shows. This they said will in turn attract foreign investors into the country. Other fashion related industries like the textile industry will benefit from a vibrant fashion industry in Ghana since the major raw material of the fashion industry is from the textile industry. Fashion, which was once a highly localized craft based industry, has evolved into one of the vibrant globalized industries and any fashion industry that wants to be recognized and accepted in the world of fashion cannot afford to compromise on certain standards that characterizes the 21st century fashion industry. Business in the fashion industry must continually promote new trends in order to sell more products. Furthermore, trends in the field are continually changing, meaning business must continually adapt to the market trends.

In this globalized world where the consumer is exposed to so many products on the market, the preference of the consumer keeps changing. Any designer of fashion set-up must be able to demystify some of these changes and predict which trends will become popular in the near future in order to satisfy the ever changing preferences of the fashion consumer. The dynamism of fashion calls for designers and fashion set-ups that are very innovative and proactive to make a mark in the fashion scene today.

In building a vibrant fashion industry, so many things must come into play without some of them there could be no vibrant fashion industry. These fashion players such as the fashion designer, retailer, wholesaler, media and the like which Eunice Antiaye describes as the integral elements of the fashion industry must be very active in order to propel the industry and make it productive. The role of these fashion players is entrenched by Rouse (1993) who described 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, journalist and advertising agencies who promote them. One thing that must be borne in mind with regard to a vibrant fashion industry is mass production as suggested by Sarah Anooson and other three respondents. This was one of the phenomenal height marks of the fashion industry in Europe during its development. Prior to the mid-19th century, most clothing was custom made. By the beginning of the 20th century, with the rise of new technology

such as the sewing machine that gave an impetus to the fashion industry and the proliferation of retail outlets such as department stores, clothing had increasingly come to be mass-produced in standard sizes and sold at fixed prices in Europe. Production on large scale calls for large labour force and the effect is that there will be a lot of job opportunities created.

Also, in considering a vibrant fashion industry, the concept of the industry consistently coming up with new range of designs at a particular period or season as suggested by some of the respondents cannot be over-emphasized. This is where the work of fashion designer becomes very important. This point buttresses what Brenninkmeyer (1962) postulated that the fashion industry could be seen as a space where the material production of garments meets the immaterial production of beliefs and signs as to which clothes look good at a given time. This practice is prevalent in all the famous fashion cities in the world. Cities like Paris, London, Milan and New York which are considered as 'the big four' in fashion obtained their status based on the fact that these cities are the major hosts of the prominent fashion weeks where new range of designs are showcased through fashion shows. Every year, these events attract thousands of people from all walks of life to these fashion centres. There is no doubt as pointed out by Attah Kofi that the fashion designer is the backbone and the fulcrum around which the fashion industry revolves. Unfortunately in Ghana, there is a missing link between the fashion designer and the fashion industry.

Just as the fashion designer plays a key role in the fashion industry, so is an abled work force with the requisite technical know-how of immense importance to a vibrant fashion industry. In the modern world where the fashion industry is characterized by a lot of technology, any industry devoid of modern machinery for production and a work force with the requisite technological know-how will struggle to make an impact in the world of fashion. This is due to the fact that the industry would not be able to produce to meet international standards and hence would not stay competitive. It goes without saying that to be able to have able workforce with the requisite technological know-how, fashion institutions must play a preponderance role. It therefore means that these institutions should be well equipped with ultra-modern teaching and learning facilities.

Automation in garment production is indispensable in the development of the fashion industry cannot be over-estimated. Hence, the Ghanaian fashion industry cannot afford to stand and stare but catch up with some of these trends if it wants to make an impact. This point confirms a statement highlighted by Fianu and Zentey (2008) when they cited Ghana Investment Promotion Centre (GIPC) in 1996 as saying that the most potentially significant technological innovations are centred on the preassembly phase of garment manufacture and such new technologies need to replace manual cutting techniques, among others, for effective garment production in Ghana. Automation in garment production such as Computer Aided Design (CAD) systems for grading patterns and computer numeric control guided automated cutting systems reduces limitations such as time constraints and increase productivity. The type and quality of machines owned by most fashion firms in Ghana are unsatisfactory. This is a serious hindrance to large-scale production and could be a very strong contributory factor to exporter inability to meet large international orders both in quality and delivery time.

The fashion set-up just like any other business needs to be run by business minds. Margaret Bamfoh was indicative of the fact that in building a vibrant fashion industry the services of businesspersons with acumen can never be overlooked. To a large extent this is very true. For instance, marketing which is an aspect of the industry is as important as making a piece of garment. Whether a product will sell or not is largely dependent on the market prowess of a firm. Chapman (1999) identifying the role of marketing personnel with respect to the fashion industry stated that these personnel make research and analysis of general fashion trends, market competition and product planning to make sure that garments produced meet market demand and continue to do so. This emphasizes the importance of business experts in the fashion industry.

For any business to thrive, it needs the enabling environment and the needed support. For instance, Osei Ntiri, lecturer (Department of Industrial Art, KNUST) revealed that the footwear 'New Balance' was able to make it on the US market because the people of New York gave the product the support by patronizing it thereby promoting it. The same story is said of Tommy Hilfiger. Looking at the feasibility of a vibrant fashion industry in Ghana, it is conspicuous from the responses of the respondents that Ghana would be a fertile ground for a vibrant fashion industry to thrive. In terms of garment construction it was unveiled that Ghana abounds in a lot of talents. It is these talented dressmakers who form the basis of the fashion industry. As underlined by Wenboleti Awaring-Ba, Ghanaians are now highly fashion conscious and trendy. This fashion awareness amongst Ghanaians is an indicative of the fact that there is a potential for a vibrant fashion industry to be born in Ghana. If a vibrant fashion industry would be possible, it largely depends on Ghanaians and since the fashion consciousness of Ghanaians is now on the high side, it gives the inkling that when the relevant policies are put in place a vibrant fashion industry could be realized, for charity they say begins at home. Some respondents testified of how patronage of their products has improved over the years. This is a sign that Ghanaians will purchase locally made

garments if they are of quality and high standard.

In the 21st century business world, the catchword is branding and this seems to be the secret behind the sale of products besides other factors such as quality. As suggested by Roberts (2004) brands succeed in occupying consumers' emotional space; they are able to endure fluctuations in demand due to their customers' fondness and enthuse loyalty beyond reason. It is evidently clear from the responses of the respondents that there are enormous benefit associated with branding, such as sales promotion and building customer loyalty but unfortunately this avenue has not been much exploited by the fashion industry in Ghana. Talking about the benefits a firm could derive from branding, Teware (2000) asserts that the source of New York's recognition in garment design comes from innovation, the use of flexible manufacturing, product development, distribution and control over branding. All over the world, especially in the fashion business branding is used as a powerful tool for promoting business. The idea of branding in fashion started as far as 1858 when Charles Worth put his name on the label of his clothes and attached some key personalities or trendsetters to his brands as a mechanism for promoting his clothes. There is no doubt that branding has taking a central position in determining the success of the fashion industry for some years now.

4.1 Job 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.

Fashion Designing

This is one of the most high profile jobs in the fashion industry. Fashion designers are people responsible for the changes in the fashion design industry and evolution of new meanings for fashion. Designers are responsible for conceptualizing their ideas on trends and realizing them on their final products. "Designers study the life of consumers through research and design to meet their socio-economic and psychological needs or interest" Amankwah (2008). They are an indispensable part of the fashion industry. There are several types of fashion designers. Among them are apparel designers, footwear designers and accessories designers.

Production

It involves the sampling of garments and accessories until producing the final garments that would be delivered to shops and customers. This massive work involves a team of various professions:

- ❖ **Merchandiser:** The merchandiser liaises between the design staff, the production staff and the sales staff to facilitate a smooth operation of the industry. Merchandising is about planning and developing a strategy to enable a company to sell a range of products that delivers sales and profit targets.
- ❖ **Technical Designers:** Ultimately putting comfort and style into consideration makes garments. Fitting is a crucial part in the fashion industry. Technical designers are the ones responsible for doing fittings during the whole sampling to production. They might not be the one who designed the garment but are the experts in providing alternative to the garment to improve the fitting of garment.
- ❖ **Pattern Makers:** Pattern is the basis for a garment to be sewed. Pattern makers produce and maintain patterns for garments that designers have sketched out. Pattern makers are key persons in realization of a garment.
- ❖ **Pattern Graders:** The sizing of garment starts with the pattern grading. Pattern graders are experts in creating size specifications for different sizes. They are vital persons for any fashion brands, as a consistent sizing across products can maintain customer loyalty and confidence.
- ❖ **Quality Control Specialists:** Quality control is of top importance for any sort of products. Quality control specialists look at the quality of raw materials, like peeling, shrinking and colour fading of textile and overall quality of a fashion item, for instance, the overall assembling of an accessory item.
- ❖ **Planners:** Fashion planners coordinate closely with designers, merchandisers and buyers to decide the production plan for the coming seasons. They look at both production and marketing side while paying close attention to the latest fashion trend.

Marketing

This is as important as making a perfect piece of fashion item. Whether it is marketing in a wholesale or retail side, people in fashion marketing bears the mission of promoting the fashion item in this fast changing world. According to chapman (1999) marketing with respect to the fashion industry involves research and analysis of general fashion trends and of the market competition; product planning to make sure that the garment produced meet demand and continue to do so.

- ❖ **Retailer:** According to Stone (2004) although retailers do not create fashion, they can encourage or retard its

progress by the degree of accuracy which they anticipate the demands of their customers. Retailers are the ones who buy ready-made products to be sold in a shop like department stores. They conduct researches and analyze market trend and customer wants to get the right products.

- ❖ Wholesaler: Chapman (1999) indicates that wholesale is everything that happens before goods are sold to individual customers. Wholesaling includes all activities required to sell goods or services to other firms usually in bulk quantities and at lower than retail prices. Wholesalers, also called distributors, are independent merchants operating any number of wholesale establishments.

Media

Besides, in the field of designing, producing or marketing a fashion item, other professionals who play a key role in the fashion industry are those who work in the media. Below is a list highlighting the other possible jobs related to fashion industry:

- ❖ Fashion Illustrator: Fashion illustrations are a very important part of fashion designing. The very base of fashion designing is illustration. Before manufacturing a costume or an accessory the first thing a fashion designer prefers is to see a visual picture of what is to be created. This is very necessary to get an idea on how it will look on models when they wear it in a fashion show or for a photo shoot. By means of fashion illustration the fashion designers can make changes to the ideas and create new one. If the fashion designer wants to make any alternation to his creation then the illustration provides that flexibility.
- ❖ Fashion Writers: They write for magazines, online blogs or sites on reviews, trends and recommendations. Fashion writers can also develop into fashion magazine editors.
- ❖ Photographer: The fashion photographer works directly for a magazine or newspaper. The photographer feeds the print media with fashion news. The role of the fashion photographer is to help fashion designers sell new products and trends to the public through image based media.

Fashion Law

Fashion is a global industry that operates in a uniquely challenging business environment. As such, it gives rise to a wide range of cutting-edge legal issues. Fashion law is a specialized area of law that deals with intellectual property (copyright and trademark law, including brand licensing), domestic and international business transactions, textiles, merchandising, employment and labour concerns, and custom (import/export issues). Fashion set-ups and designers may face unique legal challenges such as counterfeit goods and issues of unfair competition specific to their industry. They require lawyers who understand the legal issues pertaining to the fashion industry and provide advice tailored towards dealing with some of these challenges.

Fashion Supply Chain Management

Sen (2012) stipulates that the fashion industry is characterized by short product life cycles, volatile and unpredictable demand; tremendous product variety, long and inflexible supply processes and a complex supply chain. He adds that in such an environment, efficient supply chain management practices can spell the difference between success and failure. Quinn (1997) defines the supply chain as, "All of those activities associated with moving goods from the raw materials stage through to the end-user." This includes sourcing and procurement, production scheduling, order processing, inventory management, transportation, warehousing and customer services. The supply chain is a term increasingly used by logistics professionals that encompasses every effort involved in production and delivering a final product, from the supplier to the customer. Supply chain management coordinates and integrates all of these activities into a seamless process. It links all of the partners in the chain including departments within an organization and external partners including suppliers, carriers, third-party companies and information systems providers.

4.2 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 and

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 (Porta Moda, 2010).

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.

5. Conclusion

Garment is a product area with promising export potential that can generate revenue and provides thousands of job opportunities. Countries such as France, Italy, England and the United States of America who realized the potential in the fashion industry have benefitted tremendously from the industry and like the other creative industries such as music, theatre and movie, a vibrant fashion industry can greatly contribute to the socio-economic development of Ghana and could also serve as a vehicle for cultural identity that plays a role in fostering cultural diversity. It would be misleading to say flatly that a vibrant fashion industry would be the panacea to the graduate unemployment situation in Ghana, but there is also no gainsaying the fact that a vibrant fashion industry has a high propensity to help alleviate this socio-economic canker. The study has made important revelations that require attention and conscious effort from policy formulators and stakeholders involved in the development of our dear nation to take a serious look at the promising vibrant fashion industry with its ripple effects in helping to alleviate graduate unemployment.

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