

## CULTURAL HERITAGE AND FASHION: INTEGRATING TRADITIONAL VALUES INTO MODERN FASHION DESIGN AT TAKORADI TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY

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### ABSTRACT

Incorporating cultural history into current fashion design is critical for sustaining traditional values while encouraging innovation, especially at educational institutions like Takoradi Technical University (TTU). This research examines how TTU's fashion design students blend Ghanaian cultural components into modern fashion, ensuring that traditional textiles, patterns, and motifs stay relevant in today's globalised market. The study emphasises the significance of cultural sustainability, ethical issues, and the role of fashion education in bridging the gap between tradition and modernity. Despite Ghana's rich legacy, issues such as reconciling tradition with modern aesthetics, the possibility of cultural appropriation, and restricted access to traditional materials remain. This study employs a qualitative research technique, with data collected from case studies, interviews with educators and students, and reviews of fashion show documents and fashion industry publications. The findings show that TTU incorporates cultural heritage into its curriculum through historical contextualisation, hands-on workshops, interdisciplinary learning, collaborative projects, and fashion shows. These techniques provide students with practical experience and help them grasp traditional design's sociopolitical and economic relevance. However, commercialisation pressures, dwindling availability of indigenous materials, and the need for more established ethical criteria all present significant challenges. The study indicates that an education approach that strategically blends cultural history into modern fashion processes can help to create a more sustainable, inclusive, and ethical sector. Institutions like TTU help to establish a fashion sector that values and celebrates diversity by providing designers with the knowledge they need to innovate while maintaining their cultural identity.

**Keywords:** Cultural heritage, fashion education, traditional value, sustainable design, Ghanaian fashion.

### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

In an increasingly globalised world, the fashion business sometimes struggles to preserve originality while appealing to many customers. The relevance of cultural heritage in fashion design is more than just aesthetic appeal; it involves a complex tapestry of historical, social, and ethical factors. Fashion is more than just a practical item; it is a meaningful statement of one's identity, history, and culture. Clothing, for example, was used in ancient Egypt as a kind of protection and a mark of rank and identity. Linen, which was preferred for its breathability in the hot heat, was often covered with exquisite jewels and ornaments that symbolised riches

and power. The Pharaohs and aristocracy wore elaborately embroidered robes, frequently dyed in vivid colours, whilst the ordinary people wore simpler, more utilitarian attire.

Fashion was important in ancient Egypt for more than just aesthetic reasons; it was also linked to religious beliefs since particular clothing was worn during rites and ceremonies to thank the gods. At its heart is the junction of cultural history and fashion, a dynamic area where tradition and modernity mix to produce something unique. Cultural legacy encompasses the values, history, and craftsmanship handed down through generations, giving designers valuable inspiration (Lazaro et al., 2022). Incorporating cultural history into contemporary designs is a preservation strategy and a competitive advantage in a globalised society where trends travel across continents practically immediately. Traditional themes, materials, and methods help to preserve cultural identity while appealing to modern aesthetics (Amponsah, 2023). This fusion of the old and the modern puts fashion as a link between the past and the present, allowing cultures to remain linked to their origins while adopting worldwide trends.

Takoradi Technical University (TTU) exemplifies fashion's dual position as a cultural preserver and innovation catalyst. Institutions such as TTU play an important role in developing young designers by incorporating cultural heritage into their curriculum, enabling students to investigate and reinterpret their origins artistically. According to Xu (2021), educational institutions play an essential role in providing students with the ability to combine traditional approaches with current design tools, allowing them to adapt to the global fashion environment. This strategy protects Ghana's cultural identity and places its designers on the world stage as tradition-based innovators. At Takoradi Technical University, incorporating traditional values into current fashion design is an essential instructional strategy that allows students to synthesise their grasp of cultural narratives with contemporary design processes.

The university's dedication to promoting this balance is evident in various efforts, such as the annual fashion show, which this year is entitled "Timeless Elegance: Seventy Years of Fashion Evolution." On this platform, students express their creativity while appreciating Ghana's traditional heritage. Dzitse (2023) emphasises the importance of fashion events in academic contexts for bridging the gap between theoretical learning and industry experience. By highlighting cultural heritage in these displays, TTU demonstrates its commitment to conserving traditional values while training students to meet the changing needs of the global fashion business. This technique fosters rising designers' creative potential while contributing to the more significant cultural preservation effort, underlining heritage's long-term importance in current fashion.

The interaction of cultural history and current fashion design is a topic of intense research, notably at educational institutions like Takoradi Technical University. This article seeks to explain the importance of incorporating traditional values into current fashion design, developing a better knowledge of how cultural history may influence and improve contemporary practices. This discussion will emphasise the consequences of cultural and fashion integration for students, designers, and the larger community by discussing the multidimensional link between the two. The paper looked at the relevance of this integration, the approaches used in the curriculum, and the more enormous ramifications for the fashion industry.

### **1.1 Understanding Ghana Cultural Heritage in Fashion**

Cultural heritage is a complex notion that includes physical aspects, such as textiles and clothes, and intangible components, such as folklore, rituals, and social behaviours. Cultural heritage in fashion design is a valuable resource that integrates history, geography, and social dynamics to produce significant designs. Every traditional garment has significant cultural narratives, mirroring the values, beliefs, and experiences of its creators (Lazaro et al., 2022). These designs represent individuality and safeguard centuries of artistry and history.

In Ghanaian fashion, cultural legacy is expressed via textiles like Kente, Adinkra, and Batakari, manifesting historical tales and social ideals. These fabrics are valuable clothes infused with historical tales, cultural pride, and social symbols. The traditions provide designers with a rich source of inspiration, allowing them to create culturally genuine and internationally impactful works.

### 1.2 Ghana's Kente Cloth: A Global Symbol of Heritage

Kente fabric, derived from Ghana's Ashanti and Ewe communities, is a globally acknowledged emblem of Ghanaian cultural heritage. Its vivid hues and complex geometric patterns have profound symbolic significance. The gold in Kente symbolises prosperity and royalty, whilst black signifies spiritual maturity (Plate 1). Historically, Kente was designated for royalty or those of elevated social status and worn at momentous events like coronations and festivals (Plate 2). Kente has gone beyond its conventional use and is recognised worldwide as an emblem of African identity and pride (Elizabeth, 2021).

Elizabeth (2021) asserts that the Kente garments donned by Democrats following George Floyd's death were "historically worn." Numerous attendees, including prominent African-Americans, adorned Kente stoles and attire as a homage to African heritage (Plate 3). This event illustrated how traditional Ghanaian textiles can function as cultural symbols globally, emphasising these designs' universal allure and enduring significance (Lazaro et al., 2022). For Ghanaian fashion designers, this exemplifies the opportunity to incorporate traditional textiles into contemporary fashion, fostering connections with international audiences while preserving cultural authenticity.



Plate 3: Kente clothes worn by Democrats after the death of George Floyd.  
Source: <https://www.dailywire.com/news/kente-cloth>

### 1.3 Adinkra Symbols: Communicating Values through Fashion

Adinkra fabric, a notable Ghanaian textile, has symbols that communicate specific meanings, ideologies, or proverbs. These symbols, including patterns such as "Gye Nyame" (symbolising the sovereignty of God) and "Eban" (meaning security and safety), are often imprinted into cloth via traditional dyeing techniques (Ventura, 2012). Adinkra is used in funerals and other sombre rituals, fulfilling ornamental and communicative functions (Plate 4).



Plate 4: Adinkra cloth that conveys specific messages, philosophies, or proverbs. Photograph by Carol Ventura, Kumasi, Ghana, 2009.

In contemporary fashion, Ghanaian designers have used Adinkra motifs to create outfits that convey narratives or embody beliefs. Ventura (2012) states that Adinkra continually adjusts to economic situations and fashion trends, intricately embroidered by hand. This approach is regarded as costly and time-intensive; however, it remains used today. Stamped Adinkra fabric is not launderable, prompting some individuals to choose machine-printed Adinkra that is either traditionally embroidered or machine-sewn (Asare, Ibrahim, & Howard, 2019), integrating them with contemporary tailoring to produce items that attract both local and global markets.

### 1.4 Batakari and the Revival of Traditional Wear

The Batakari, or smock, is a traditional garment from northern Ghana, often linked to chiefs and community leaders (Plate 5). Batakari traditionally handwoven and embroidered clothes are renowned for their artistry and cultural importance. They are usually worn at festivals and rites of passage, representing leadership and solidarity (Asare, Ibrahim, & Howard, 2019).

Recent initiatives have aimed to rejuvenate and renovate the Batakari to attract younger demographics. Annual initiatives like "National Batakari Day" in Ghana encourage residents to don the smock, fostering national pride and supporting local craftsmen (Gbor et al., 2023). This event illustrates the recontextualisation of cultural heritage in a contemporary framework while maintaining its historical importance. It highlights the economic possibilities of promoting traditional attire in local and worldwide markets, allowing fashion designers to innovate while fostering cultural preservation.

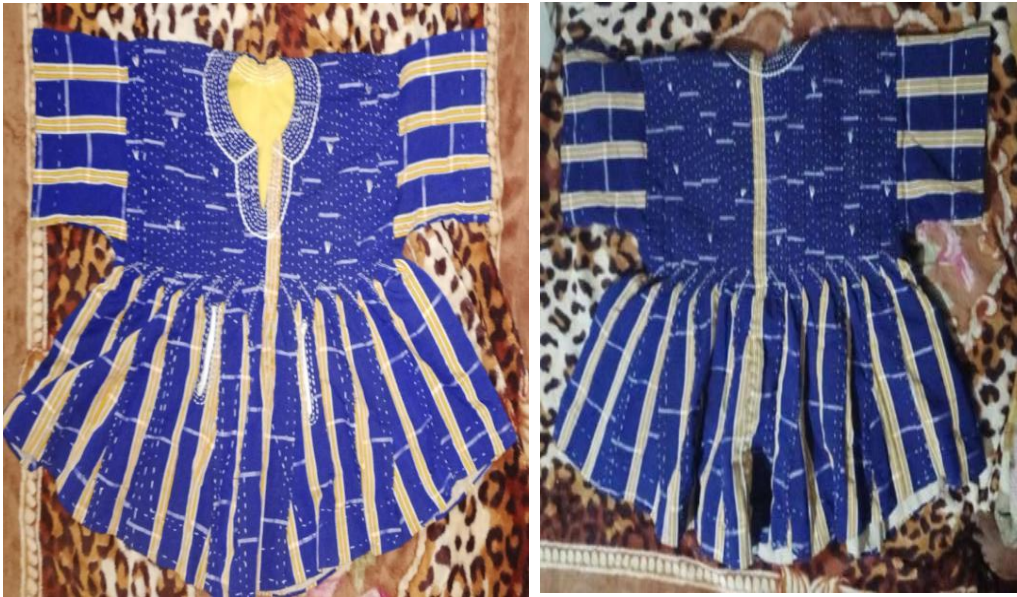


Plate 5: Traditionally handwoven and embroidered Batakari garments. Photograph by Abati.O. Isaac 2024

Incorporating cultural heritage into fashion is essential for safeguarding traditional knowledge systems and promoting cultural pride. For designers at Takoradi Technical University, understanding the historical and symbolic significance of textiles such as Kente, Adinkra, and Batakari is essential for producing authentic and meaningful designs. Furthermore, as global consumers progressively choose fashion that embodies sustainability and ethical behaviours, cultural heritage offers a foundation for developing designs that align with these principles (Lazaro et al., 2022). Ghanaian designers can create distinctive works for the global market by drawing inspiration from their cultural background, thereby preserving their heritage identity. Furthermore, the success narratives of Kente and Adinkra's worldwide acclaim demonstrate that traditional Ghanaian textiles can shape international fashion trends, generating economic and cultural prospects for local designers.

At Takoradi Technical University, designers are urged to immerse themselves in cultural components, using them as a source of inspiration to develop fashion collections that transcend mere aesthetics. Comprehending the symbolic significances of colours, patterns, and materials enables students to develop designs that respect their heritage while resonating with contemporary aesthetics. This method cultivates a profound emotional connection with customers who increasingly prioritise authenticity and cultural narratives in fashion. Furthermore, the integration of cultural heritage in fashion corresponds with international initiatives to preserve intangible cultural assets. Lazaro et al. (2022) assert that safeguarding ancient traditions via creative sectors such as fashion facilitates continuity while adapting them to modern circumstances. Valuing and integrating these cultural components into their creations, fashion design students at Takoradi Technical University may aid in preserving and promoting their history while meeting the requirements of a globalised fashion market.

### 1.5 The Significance of Ghana Cultural Heritage in Fashion Design

Cultural heritage significantly influences the personalities and creations of fashion designers. It provides a basis for designers to develop their designs while respecting the traditions and

histories of their communities. By integrating parts of cultural history, designers may produce works that resonate profoundly with customers, cultivating a feeling of connection and belonging. This relationship is especially significant in a globalised market where customers progressively seek authenticity and significance in their acquisitions. In addition to its utilitarian role, fashion reflects identity, history, and culture. The convergence of cultural heritage and fashion is a dynamic realm where tradition intersects with modernity, yielding distinctive manifestations of art and identity. Cultural legacy, which includes the values, history, and craftsmanship transmitted over generations, is a profound source of inspiration for designers. The resurgence of the indigenous Kente cloth in Ghanaian current fashion exemplifies the ability of traditional textiles to flourish in contemporary settings. Designers such as Christie Brown have effectively incorporated Kente into contemporary fashion (Plate 6), producing internationally acclaimed collections that harmonise tradition with innovation (Gbor et al., 2023; Xu et al., 2021). This story illustrates that safeguarding cultural heritage via fashion may provide access to worldwide markets, enhancing its significance globally.



Plate 6: Integrated Kente and Ankara into modern fashion by Christie Brown. Source: <https://www.bellanaijastyle.com/christie-fall-19-campaign/>

In the ever-changing fashion sector, cultural heritage offers stability and uniqueness. The innovative recreation of historical themes, materials, and methods guarantees the preservation of cultural identity while maintaining the attraction of designs for modern audiences (Amponsah, 2023). Anita Quansah's narrative, a London-based designer of Ghanaian heritage, illustrates this equilibrium. Quansah has been acclaimed worldwide for integrating African beading and fabrics into her designs (Plate 7), demonstrating that heritage may be a competitive advantage when fused with contemporary aesthetics (Lazaro et al., 2022). These real-world instances underscore that cultural history serves as both an inspiration and a strategic resource for developing designs that have worldwide appeal.



Plate 7: Beadwork and Textile Design of Anita Quansah. Source: <https://edition.cnn.com/style/article/african-voices-anita-quansah/index.html>

Takoradi Technical University (TTU) aggressively promotes fashion's twin position as a custodian of culture and a vehicle for innovation. Throughout the years, TTU has developed into a centre for fostering creativity by integrating cultural heritage into its fashion curriculum. During the university's annual fashion show, "Timeless Elegance: Seventy Years of Fashion Evolution," students presented designs influenced by Ghana's rich cultural legacy. A notable collection showcased updated interpretations of Adinkra symbols, historically used in storytelling and ceremonies, now integrated into stylish, contemporary apparel. These programs honour Ghana's past and equip pupils for international competitiveness. Agordah et al. (2023) assert that these events connect classroom education with industrial realities, enabling students to use their abilities in a practical context.

Furthermore, TTU's dedication to cultural preservation is apparent in its collaborations with the traditional fashion industry and former students engaged in the sector. Through collaboration with traditional Kente weavers, batik artisans, and other practitioners, the university guarantees students practical experience with authentic methods. This collaborative methodology reflects the expertise of esteemed designer Oswald Boateng, who attributes his international success to the profound comprehension of his Ghanaian heritage and its integration into his designs (Plate 8) (Dzitse, 2023). Boateng's narrative emphasises the significance of anchoring innovation in tradition, a principle that TTU imparts to its aspiring designers.

TTU maintains traditions and gives new designers the necessary skills to adapt and succeed in a dynamic global business by incorporating cultural heritage into contemporary fashion education. The university's methodology emphasises the capacity of cultural legacy to surpass local confines and have a worldwide influence, transforming fashion into a conduit that links the past, present, and future.



Plate 8: The integration of traditional design in a modern exhibition by Oswald Boateng.

Source: <https://fashionsizzle.com/2013/05/oswald-boateng/>

## 2.0 METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

This study uses a qualitative research technique to investigate the incorporation of traditional values into current fashion design, focussing on Takoradi Technical University (TTU). The technique is designed to thoroughly grasp how traditional cultural components are integrated into fashion education and practice. A case study research approach is used to examine the practices of fashion students on the runway at TTU. This method allows for a thorough study of the university's curriculum, student initiatives, and industrial relationships, including cultural heritage in fashion. The case study technique is ideal because it gives detailed, contextual information on how traditional values are incorporated into current fashion education (Harrison et al., 2017).

The study utilises various data-gathering approaches to obtain varied views and improve research validity. Open-ended interviews were conducted with fashion design students and alumni to learn about their experiences integrating cultural heritage into their work. Faculty members were asked how traditional values are incorporated into the curriculum. Open-ended questions drive the interviews, enabling respondents to freely express thoughts while assuring agreement with the study's goals (Hammer & Wildavsky, 2018).

The researcher does non-participant observations at TTU's fashion workshops, exhibits, and runway presentations of students' collections. Observing students' creative processes and interactions with cultural aspects directly shows how traditional values are used in their work (Leung et al., 2008). The research examines the current TTU fashion curriculum, project reports, and exhibition records to see how traditional heritage is formalised in fashion education. Furthermore, case studies of famous student projects are examined to determine the level of cultural representation in their designs.

### 2.1 Methodologies Employed in the Curriculum at Takoradi Technical University

The fashion design program at Takoradi Technical University (TTU) is carefully designed to integrate traditional craftsmanship with contemporary design methodologies (Agordah et al.,



2023). The institution acknowledges the essential influence of cultural history on the creative identity of designers. It uses several approaches to engage students in fashion design's technical and cultural aspects. These methodologies encompass practical workshops, collaborative projects, and research-oriented assignments, all aimed at augmenting students' technical skills while cultivating a profound understanding of the cultural significance of the materials and techniques employed (Agordah, 2024). This method guarantees that graduates possess the skills necessary to thrive in a globalised fashion business while maintaining a robust cultural identity that influences their creative endeavours.

A distinctive characteristic of the program is its focus on traditional textile skills, including weaving, dyeing, millinery, and embroidery. These strategies are presented to students via theoretical education and hands-on practice, facilitating their comprehension of historical context and current significance. Huo and Skliarenko (2024) assert that integrating traditional textile arts into design education safeguards these cultural traditions and motivates students to reimagine them creatively. Through these methodologies, students at TTU may develop designs that respect their cultural heritage while resonating with contemporary tastes, thus fulfilling the simultaneous need for authenticity and creativity in the fashion sector.

Besides studio-based study, TTU's curriculum incorporates excursions to the informal fashion industry, cultural landmarks, and professional groups. These trips provide students with direct exposure to Ghana's diverse cultural heritage, enabling them to view and participate in traditional artisan practices in authentic environments. These encounters enhance their understanding of the creativity and effort inherent in traditional approaches while providing practical insights applicable to their ideas. Wang et al. (2024) assert that practical learning experiences are essential for developing a comprehensive knowledge of fashion that integrates technical proficiency with cultural insight. Furthermore, these experiences help students establish connections within the local fashion ecosystem, equipping them for smooth transfers into the professional realm. TTU is dedicated to maintaining traditional craftsmanship and values via its extensive and culturally informed curriculum while providing students with the resources to innovate and succeed in a globalised business (Agordah, 2024). TTU harmonises traditional legacy with contemporary design methodologies, enabling its graduates to significantly preserve Ghana's vibrant fashion traditions while establishing themselves as competitive entities in the global arena.

## **2.2 Case Studies of Successful Integrating Traditional Values in Fashion Curriculum**

Takoradi Technical University's curriculum thoroughly comprehends traditional and modern fashion practices through a blend of theoretical and practical methodologies. It encompasses Historical Contextualisation, Practical Workshops, Collaborative Projects, Interdisciplinary Learning, Research and Documentation, and Fashion Shows and Exhibitions.

### **i. Historical Contextualisation in Fashion Education**

Historical contextualisation is an essential part of the Takoradi Technical University (TTU) fashion curriculum, giving students a thorough grasp of the history of Ghanaian fabrics, outfits, and design aesthetics. This technique enables fashion designers to investigate traditional dress's deeply ingrained cultural meaning, ensuring their creative outputs reflect historical authenticity and contemporary relevance (Xu et al., 2021). To address contemporary society's ever-

increasing requirements, higher education institutions must generate skilled innovators and critical thinkers for the future (Nyawovor, 2014). As a follow-up to Nyawovor's remark, TTU students learn about the sociopolitical, economic, and technical elements that have affected fashion throughout history by researching the origins of certain fabrics, patterns, and styles.

Fashion is inextricably linked with history, identity, and social evolution. TTU students study the historical evolution of traditional Ghanaian textiles such as Kente, Adinkra, Millinery, Batakari (smock), headpiece, and Fugu, learning about their symbolic meanings, stitching processes, and social value. Students study how Kente evolved from an exclusive royal cloth to a widely accepted cultural symbol worn internationally (Abungu & Nodoro, 2022). Similarly, the Northern Ghanaian smock (Batakari/Fugu), which warriors and chiefs traditionally wore, has become a symbol of national pride, often worn by politicians and dignitaries. Tracing these modifications helps students understand the flexibility of traditional dress and how it represents changes in power, prestige, and cultural identity (Wang et al., 2024).

An essential component of TTU's history studies is investigating how colonial control impacted indigenous textile manufacturing. During the colonial period, European goods swamped local marketplaces, reducing the demand for handcrafted textiles and displacing many native weavers. The British government promoted textile industrialisation, often adopting African themes for mass manufacturing while weakening local craftsmen (Frederick, 2020). For example, the Vlisco Dutch wax patterns, which have become associated with West African fashion, were initially created in the Netherlands using Indonesian Batik methods. While African markets accepted these textiles, their dominance resulted in the steady demise of locally produced Adinkra and tie-dye fabrics (Abungu & Nodoro, 2022). Understanding this history enables TTU students to interact critically with current textile manufacturing and devise ways to revitalise traditional hand-woven fabric via sustainable fashion projects (Nunoo et al., 2021).

Globalisation has significantly influenced fashion, shaping how cultural components are accepted, changed, and commercialised. TTU students investigate how Ghanaian traditional fabrics have been integrated into global fashion trends, focussing on African diaspora designers and luxury fashion businesses. One notable example is Ozwald Boateng, a British-Ghanaian designer who has effectively incorporated Kente themes into current high-end menswear, reinventing African fashion worldwide (Abungu & Nodoro, 2022). Similarly, major designers like Stella McCartney and Burberry have included African designs in their collections, creating arguments regarding cultural appropriation vs appreciation (Nunoo et al., 2021). By examining these instances, students learn to distinguish between preserving legacy and commercialising tradition. TTU also pushes students to find new methods to modernise traditional clothes. For example, in 2022, a group of TTU graduates debuted a collection that merged Adinkra symbols with digital fabric printing, making the patterns more accessible to younger customers while keeping their historical significance.

## **ii. Preserving Cultural Narratives through Research and Documentation**

A primary aim of historical contextualisation is to provide students with the means to record and safeguard their cultural heritage. TTU partners with local historians, museums, and textile archives to give students access to original research resources, including historic weaving looms, archival textiles, and oral histories from master weavers.

An exemplary case is the research undertaken by Dr Faustina Emefa Agordah, a prominent millinery specialist and historian in Ghana. She has extensively investigated the symbolism inherent in headpiece designs and patterns. Her lectures at TTU on research techniques elucidated how each theme symbolises proverbs, historical events, cultural values, and modern relevance. Motivated by this, several students include old stitching methods in their designs, guaranteeing that heritage is central to their creative process.

The Ghana National Museum of Textiles has collaborated with TTU to expose students to rare and endangered textile designs. Students do field research by interviewing traditional weavers in Kumasi, Bolgatanga, and Ho, documenting their crafting skills to save indigenous knowledge (Abungu & Ndor, 2022). TTU integrates research-driven projects into the curriculum, enabling students to promote cultural sustainability and emphasising that fashion transcends aesthetics to encompass the preservation and narration of tales via design. A primary aim of historical contextualisation is to provide students with the means to record and safeguard their cultural heritage. TTU partners with local historians, museums, and textile archives to offer students access to original research resources, including historic weaving looms, archival textiles, and oral histories from master weavers.

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Plate 9: Conducting research with the locals by the students. Source: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/2019>

### iii. Practical Workshops

Practical workshops enable students to engage with traditional fashion and textile methods, including sewing, weaving and dyeing, thereby cultivating a concrete link to their cultural past. These workshops augment technical competencies and foster creativity and innovation in design (Kelly et al., 2023). Students learn from proficient craftsmen and instructors who impart their experience in traditional techniques, including batik, kente weaving, sewing and natural dyeing procedures (Plate 10). Through direct engagement with these techniques, students recognise the labour-intensive characteristics of traditional crafts and their inherent creativity. Additionally, these seminars frequently conclude with projects in which students produce their own works, enabling them to implement their acquired knowledge in a practical setting. This interactive learning method reinforces their comprehension and motivates students to integrate historic components into modern fashion design.



Plate 10: *Practical Workshops with lecturers in batik, Kente weaving, and natural dyeing processes* Source: Department of Textile Design and Technology - Takoradi Technical University  
<https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=570559388700072&set=pcb.570556048700406> 2024

### 2.3 Collaborative Projects

Collaborative initiatives with local craftspeople and cultural institutions connect academics and the community. These collaborations allow students to understand the practical uses of old practices while aiding in preserving cultural heritage. Through collaboration with local artisans, students acquire knowledge of traditional techniques while gaining insight into the economic and social aspects of the regional fashion sector. These collaborations frequently provide community-oriented initiatives emphasising the significance of sustainable practices and ethical fashion. Students typically create a collection that highlights ancient skills while confronting current challenges such as environmental sustainability or fair trade (Plate 11). This method improves students' educational experiences and empowers local craftspeople, cultivating a sense of pride and ownership in their cultural heritage.



Plate 11: Collaborative projects Source [Department of Textile Design and Technology - Takoradi Technical University](https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=570559388700072&set=pcb.570556048700406) <https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=570559388700072&set=pcb.570556048700406> 2023

## 2.4 Interdisciplinary Learning

Incorporating traditional values into the fashion curriculum necessitates an interdisciplinary approach, enabling students to examine the interrelations among fashion, history, sociology, and anthropology. This comprehensive viewpoint enables students to recognise that fashion encompasses not just apparel but also identity, culture, and expression (Nunoo et al., 2021). Courses may encompass subjects such as the influence of fashion on social movements, the ramifications of cultural appropriation, and the importance of traditional garments in many cultural events. Through analysing these intersections, students may cultivate a more sophisticated comprehension of their design methodologies and the ramifications of their work within a global framework. This interdisciplinary framework promotes critical thinking and cultivates a comprehensive perspective of fashion as a dynamic and growing art form and means of communication.

## 2.5 Fashion Shows and Exhibitions: Showcasing Cultural Heritage in Modern Designs

Fashion shows and exhibits are significant forums for preserving and promoting cultural heritage within modern fashion. At Takoradi Technical University (TTU), these events are included in the fashion curriculum, enabling students to innovatively recreate traditional Ghanaian materials, themes, and workmanship in contemporary creations. Through the integration of history and creativity, students and nascent designers present collections that embody cultural identity while resonating with global audiences. This method guarantees that traditional aesthetics are preserved throughout modernisation, evolving in ways that remain pertinent and commercially viable (Agordah, 2024).

### i. Fashion Shows as a Medium for Cultural Storytelling

Fashion extends beyond simple clothing; it is a visual language communicating stories of identity, heritage, and social status within a community. At TTU, students are encouraged to utilise fashion exhibitions to illustrate the history and significance of Ghanaian textiles, such as Kente, Adinkra, Batakari (smock), and Fugu. These materials, infused with symbolic meaning, are reimagined into modern forms that attract contemporary fashion consumers.

The annual TTU Fashion Show highlights designs that underscore Ghanaian fashion's historical and cultural importance. In 2022, a student presented a collection inspired by Ashanti royal regalia, with gold and purple tones drawn from Kente designs and an intricate millinery embellished with beading to symbolise wealth, authority, and the spiritual safeguarding of women (Plate 12). In 2024, students presented a collection inspired by Ashanti royal regalia, with green and gold embroidery, handwoven Kente, caps, and working sticks symbolising wealth, authority, seniority, and spiritual safeguarding (Plate 13). Such displays facilitate the audience's understanding of the importance and complexities of traditional attire, ensuring that these narratives endure and are comprehended by future generations (Gabor et al. (2022).



Plate 12 Students presented a collection inspired by the Ashanti royal regalia. Source: <https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=1028639109270275&set=pcb.1028639475936905> 2022



Plate 13: Students presented a collection inspired by the Ashanti royal regalia, incorporating green and gold embroidery, handwoven Kente. Source: <https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=1028639109270275&set=pcb.1028639475936905> 2024

## 2.6 Reviving Traditional Techniques through Exhibitions

Exhibitions provide an educational resource for designers and the public, offering a chance to examine the artistry involved in traditional textiles. At TTU, fashion displays frequently showcase live demonstrations of traditional woven fabric, dyeing, and embroidery processes, enabling spectators to observe the craftsmanship and effort required in textile production. An exemplary instance is the 2021 TTU Textile Innovation Exhibition, whereby students partnered with local craftsmen to develop designs utilising natural colours derived from plants like indigo and kola nuts. The exhibition showcased completed outfits and emphasised the sustainable methods of Indigenous textile production, underscoring the significance of environmentally conscious design solutions derived from heritage (Afriyie et al., 2023). These shows connect history and contemporary practices, enabling designers to respect tradition while using new technology and trends. Students have direct experience in traditional textile manufacturing by collaborating with skilled artisans (lecturers), assuring the transmission and adaptation of these techniques for modern markets.

## 2.7 The Role of Fashion Shows in Cultural Exchange and Global Influence

Fashion events and exhibitions serve as cultural exchange platforms, allowing Ghanaian designers international exposure. African-inspired designs have influenced global fashion trends, with Ghanaian materials shown on runways in Paris, Milan, London, and New York (Barratt & Nordin, 2024). A significant example is the collaboration between Ghanaian business Studio 189 and New York Fashion Week, which features traditional batik and Kente motifs in a contemporary collection. The combination of traditional heritage and modern aesthetics drew worldwide attention, proving that indigenous designs can compete on global platforms (Adeyemi, 2023).

Similarly, TTU students participate in fashion shows and cultural festivals, displaying designs combining Ghanaian culture and modern aesthetics. TTU students received praise for their fashion display, which featured a collection inspired by Kente and Adinkra symbols that artistically represented wisdom, strength, and leadership. This exposure helps new designers to expand their enterprises globally while keeping true to their roots.



Plate 14: Students participate in fashion shows and cultural festivals, showcasing designs that merge Ghanaian heritage with contemporary styles Source: <https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=1028639109270275&set=pcb.1028639475936905> 2024

Incorporating cultural history into fashion shows is critical for maintaining traditional identities while embracing modernity. As globalisation progresses, there is a risk of cultural loss, in which indigenous customs are displaced by Westernised mass manufacturing. However, fashion shows that focus on heritage-based designs offset this tendency by:

- i. Creating Awareness: They teach audiences about Ghana's rich fashion heritage, instilling pride and admiration for local workmanship.
- ii. Supporting Artisans: Collaborations between designers and traditional craftspeople help to maintain and adapt legacy skills for modern markets.
- iii. Driving Economic Growth: Showcasing handcrafted textiles in premium fashion marketplaces increases demand for locally produced fabrics, hence bolstering Ghana's textile sector. Fostering Innovation: Combining tradition with new trends helps designers to explore creative boundaries while retaining cultural authenticity.

## 2.8 Providing Students with a Platform to Showcase Their Work

Finally, holding fashion shows and exhibitions that honour traditional ideals in fashion gives students an avenue to demonstrate their work (Plate 15). These events frequently combine traditional and contemporary designs, allowing students to share their interpretations of cultural heritage with a larger audience. Such exhibitions encourage student creativity and raise awareness of the significance of conserving traditional practices in the face of accelerating

globalisation. By bringing local communities, industry experts, and the general public to these events, the university encourages a discussion regarding the relevance of traditional fashion in today's society. This exposure can lead to chances for students to network with business experts and learn about prospective career choices that reflect their cultural heritage. Furthermore, it provides students with vital input from professionals, allowing them to improve their skills and prepare for the competitive fashion market (Afriyie et al., 2023).



Plate 15: TTU organises fashion shows and exhibitions celebrating traditional values in fashion, which provides students with a platform to showcase their works. Source: <https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=1028639109270275&set=2024>.

### 3.0 CHALLENGES AND CONSIDERATIONS IN INTEGRATING TRADITIONAL VALUES INTO MODERN FASHION

Integrating traditional values into modern fashion presents both opportunities and challenges. While it allows for cultural preservation, creative innovation, and economic empowerment, designers must also navigate complex issues such as cultural appropriation, balancing heritage with contemporary trends, and ensuring market sustainability. Addressing these concerns requires a thoughtful approach that respects cultural narratives while making heritage fashion relevant to today's global industry.

#### 3.1 Navigating Cultural Sensitivity in Fashion Design

Maintaining cultural sensitivity is a primary problem in incorporating traditional values into contemporary fashion. The global fashion business has seen heightened criticism about cultural appropriation, whereby aspects of a culture are used without enough acknowledgment, comprehension, or respect (Dzitse, 2023). Ethical fashion design necessitates that designers thoroughly explore the histories and significances of the traditional symbols, patterns, and methods they integrate into their creations.

Takoradi Technical University (TTU) students are urged to investigate the socio-historical importance of traditional costumes and textiles. This involves collaboration with cultural custodians, craftspeople, and historians to guarantee genuine depiction (Mefful et al., 2024). Ghanaian designers have prominently integrated Kente fabric into current fashion responsibly, preserving its historical and spiritual value while modifying it for contemporary markets (Afriyie et al., 2023).

The program also includes case studies of successful and problematic examples of cultural integration in fashion. Examining topics like Louis Vuitton's appropriation of Maasai beading



enables students to critically evaluate the delicate distinction between admiration and exploitation. Essential enquiries they are prompted to address encompass:

- i. Who derives an advantage from this design?
- ii. Are the cultural narratives depicted with accuracy?
- iii. Were the perspectives of the communities included in the design process?

This method promotes ethical accountability, guaranteeing that students use historical aspects as ornamental designs and significant representations of history.

### 3.2 Blending Tradition and Innovation

A further problem is attaining an equilibrium between preserving tradition and adopting innovation. Although preserving cultural authenticity is crucial, designers must modify traditional aesthetics to align with modern customer tastes and global fashion trends (Amponsah, 2023). This is especially pertinent in an industry where rapid fashion emphasises cost-efficiency above conventional workmanship.

At TTU, students use contemporary design methodologies to investigate the reinterpretation of traditional Ghanaian textiles like Kente, Adinkra, and Fugu. Some designers are exploring digital printing to replicate traditional designs on lightweight, breathable textiles for worldwide markets rather than only depending on handwoven techniques (Ventura, 2012). This guarantees that cultural heritage retains its significance without being limited to ceremonial or special-occasion attire.

Designers like Christie Brown have shown the integration of traditional beading and embroidery into high-fashion apparel, resulting in modern works that are culturally grounded (Gbor et al., 2022). Likewise, TTU students are urged to explore contemporary shapes, fabric alterations, and ecological materials while preserving a strong link to their cultural heritage.

Nonetheless, economic considerations also affect the equilibrium between tradition and innovation. Emerging designers must evaluate market needs and pricing tactics while maintaining the integrity of historical aspects in their quest for profitability. This requires robust market research and customer behaviour comprehension to render heritage-based products financially feasible (Barratt & Nordin, 2024).

### 3.3 Addressing Commercial Viability and Market Demands

An essential factor in incorporating traditional values into contemporary fashion is guaranteeing that designs have cultural significance and economic viability. Globalisation is progressively shaping the fashion business, necessitating designers to harmonise their creations with global customer expectations while maintaining cultural integrity (Mefful et al., 2024).

To remedy this, TTU incorporates business and marketing classes into its fashion curriculum, instructing students on how to:

- i. Establish heritage-based designs within a competitive marketplace
- ii. Formulate robust branding strategies that emphasise cultural authenticity.

iii. Participate in ethical sourcing and sustainable manufacturing techniques

The "Wear Ghana Movement" has effectively encouraged the regular use of traditional materials, resulting in a change in consumer behaviour favouring the appreciation and acquisition of locally produced heritage-based fashion (Ameyaw et al., 2023).

Furthermore, organisations like the African Fashion Foundation provide financial support and guidance to nascent designers, guaranteeing Indigenous dress preservation and economic sustainability (Huo & Skliarenko, 2024). By integrating these industrial insights into their curriculum, TTU students gain practical expertise in developing sustainable business models while remaining faithful to their cultural narratives.

### 3.4 Broader Implications for the Fashion Industry

The implications of integrating traditional values into modern fashion design extend far beyond the walls of Takoradi Technical University. As students graduate and enter the fashion industry, they profoundly understand the importance of cultural heritage, ethical practices, and creative innovation. This knowledge positions them as advocates for a more inclusive and diverse fashion landscape that celebrates the richness of global cultures rather than appropriating them. Furthermore, the university's approach is a model for other institutions and designers worldwide, highlighting the potential for traditional values to inform and enrich contemporary fashion practices.

In a world increasingly characterised by cultural exchange and collaboration, the lessons learned at Takoradi Technical University will undoubtedly contribute to a more nuanced and respectful dialogue about identity, creativity, and sustainability in the fashion industry. Integrating cultural heritage into fashion design holds profound implications for the global fashion industry, shaping it into a more ethical, inclusive, and culturally authentic space. As consumers increasingly consider the moral and social dimensions of their purchasing decisions, there is a noticeable shift toward fashion that blends style with sustainability and cultural respect (Huo & Skliarenko, 2024). This shift reflects a growing demand for inclusivity and diversity in fashion, with consumers seeking designs that celebrate global cultures while respecting their origins. By prioritising cultural heritage, designers can play a pivotal role in fostering a fashion landscape that values these principles. Amponsah (2023) emphasises that including traditional values in modern designs not only preserves cultural narratives but also enhances the uniqueness and marketability of fashion products.

One of the critical challenges addressed through this integration is cultural appropriation, where elements of a culture are borrowed or commercialised without proper understanding, acknowledgement, or respect. Cultural appropriation undermines the authenticity of designs and contributes to the exploitation of marginalised communities. However, by fostering a deeper appreciation for cultural narratives, designers can create fashion honouring the traditions and histories of the cultures from which they draw inspiration. Huo and Skliarenko (2024) argue that such practices enhance the authenticity of designs while promoting collaboration and mutual respect, offering an ethical alternative to exploitative practices. This approach strengthens the fashion industry's commitment to cultural preservation and helps bridge gaps between traditional artisans and modern designers.

Furthermore, integrating cultural heritage contributes to a more inclusive fashion industry, shifting away from the historically Eurocentric focus and embracing the richness of diverse cultural identities. Designers trained in frameworks that emphasise cultural heritage, such as those at Takoradi Technical University, are better equipped to address global trends while remaining rooted in cultural authenticity. This aligns with the industry's growing focus on ethical practices and sustainable fashion. According to Xu et al. (2021), initiatives that prioritise cultural heritage not only prepare designers to navigate the complexities of the global market but also serve as a counterbalance to the homogenisation of fashion. Integrating traditional values into modern fashion design at institutions like Takoradi Technical University serves as a vital educational framework, equipping emerging designers with the tools to navigate the multifaceted challenges of the global fashion industry. By emphasising the importance of cultural heritage, the curriculum enriches creative practices and contributes to the evolution of a more ethical, sustainable, and inclusive fashion landscape. As the fashion industry evolves, the lessons derived from this integration will be indispensable in shaping a future where innovation coexists with cultural authenticity.

#### **4.0 CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, integrating traditional values into modern fashion design at TTU represents a significant and multifaceted endeavour encompassing historical, ethical, and creative dimensions. Fostering a deep appreciation for cultural heritage, the university equips students with the tools necessary to navigate the complexities of the fashion industry while honouring the narratives that shape their identities. As the fashion landscape evolves, the lessons learned from this integration will undoubtedly resonate, promoting the industry's more sustainable, inclusive, and culturally rich future. The implications of this discourse extend beyond the confines of academia, inviting a broader reflection on the role of cultural heritage in shaping contemporary practices and identities within the global fashion arena.

Cultural heritage in fashion design cannot be overstated. It serves as a vital link between the past and the present, allowing for the preservation and celebration of diverse identities. By incorporating traditional textiles, patterns, and construction techniques, designers honour their cultural narratives and contribute to a more sustainable and inclusive fashion industry. As consumers increasingly seek authenticity and meaning in their purchases, the role of cultural heritage in fashion will continue to grow, shaping the future of design and expression in profound ways.

The integration of traditional values into modern fashion presents a dynamic interplay between cultural preservation and contemporary adaptation. While designers must navigate issues such as cultural appropriation, balancing heritage with innovation, and ensuring economic viability, institutions like TTU play a crucial role in equipping students with the necessary skills and ethical frameworks to address these challenges. By fostering deep cultural engagement, promoting innovative design practices, and incorporating market-oriented strategies, fashion education can prepare the next generation of designers to create garments that honour cultural heritage while impacting the global fashion industry.

#### **5.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

To successfully incorporate traditional values into contemporary fashion design while tackling the identified obstacles, the following guidelines should be taken into account:

**i. Enhancing Ethical Standards for Cultural Representation**

Fashion institutes like Takoradi Technical University should formulate detailed ethical rules that delineate optimal procedures for integrating cultural heritage into modern designs. These rules must underscore respect, authenticity, and partnership with cultural custodians to avert cultural appropriation. Furthermore, students must be motivated to interact with local communities and artisans to acquire direct knowledge and guarantee ethical representation.

**ii. Promoting Collaboration with Indigenous Artisans and Cultural Authorities**

Designers must engage with indigenous craftsmen and cultural authorities to safeguard and advance traditional workmanship. Collaborations between fashion students and the informal fashion industry can facilitate knowledge transfer, guaranteeing that conventional processes are authentically portrayed and sustainably implemented. This partnership will benefit students and create economic prospects for artists, safeguarding threatened crafts.

**iii. Augmenting the Fashion Curriculum with Interdisciplinary Education**

Fashion education must integrate multidisciplinary disciplines such as history, sociology, anthropology, and business to enhance students' comprehension of cultural narratives and commercial demands. This method will allow students to critically assess the socio-political impacts on traditional dress and incorporate this understanding into their designs.

**iv. Utilising Technology for Cultural Conservation and Advancement**

Digital technologies, including digital machinery, artificial intelligence (AI), and digital weaving methods, can contemporise old designs while preserving their cultural importance. Universities and industry partners should invest in research examining how emerging technology might transform heritage fashion while preserving its historical integrity.

**v. Advocating for Cultural Sensitivity Training in Fashion Education**

Universities should incorporate cultural sensitivity training into their curricula to promote cultural appreciation instead of appropriation. This instruction can assist students in comprehending the ethical ramifications of incorporating cultural motifs and traditions into their work. Workshops, guest lectures, and immersive cultural exchange programs can enhance students' perspectives and promote responsible design practices.

**vi. Coordinating Annual Heritage-Centric Fashion Shows and Exhibitions**

Fashion institutions should persist in hosting events commemorating the amalgamation of tradition and contemporary. These events should function as venues for students to showcase their culturally inspired collections while interacting with the public, industry leaders, and policymakers. These forums can promote awareness regarding the significance of preserving traditional processes within a swiftly globalising fashion business.

**vi. Encouraging governmental and industrial endorsement of heritage fashion**

Governments and industry leaders ought to allocate resources to initiatives that assist young designers in incorporating cultural heritage into their creations. Financial efforts, grants, and mentorship programs can furnish designers with the resources required to create heritage-inspired apparel that is both commercially sustainable and culturally sensitive. By implementing these recommendations, fashion institutions and industry stakeholders can create an environment where traditional values are seamlessly integrated into modern fashion, ensuring sustainability, ethical representation, and cultural appreciation.

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