

*Original Research Article*

**EXPLORING THE INTEGRATION OF AFRICAN PRINTS INTO NIGHTWEAR  
DESIGN IN GHANA: AN EXAMINATION OF DIVERSITY IN USE AND  
RENDITION**

**Abstract**

***Purpose:*** The study explored the integration of African prints into nightwear design, focusing on diversity in use and rendition. It aims to understand the cultural and consumer perspectives, create African print nightwear designs, and assess their impact on the fashion industry in Ghana.

***Materials and methods:*** The study adopted a studio-based qualitative research approach, emphasizing creativity and practical experimentation. It involved designing and producing three different African print nightwear designs. Data collection included one-on-one interviews with consumers, fashion designers, textile experts, and fashion economists selected purposively.

***Results and discussions:*** The study presents three African print nightwear designs inspired by the theme 'Night of Passion.' These designs incorporated African print fabrics, catering to comfort and aesthetics. Consumer responses indicate a preference for comfortable and culturally

inspired nightwear, showcasing the market's demand for African print nightwear. The economic impact of using African prints in the nightwear industry is positive, contributing to increased sales, market expansion, and support for artisans.

**Implications:** The integration of African prints into nightwear design offers economic opportunities for the fashion industry in Ghana. It could allow for preserving and celebrating African culture, challenging Western-centric beauty standards and promoting inclusivity and self-expression. To promote this trend, policymakers and industry stakeholders can support local textile production and artisans, facilitate market access, and encourage sustainable and ethical production practices. Promoting cultural diversity in fashion can also lead to a more inclusive and representative industry.

**Value/Originality:** The value of this study lies in its creative approach to incorporating African prints into nightwear design, exploring consumer preferences, and assessing the economic impact. It offers a unique perspective on the intersection of culture, fashion, and comfort in Ghana's nightwear design context.

**Keywords:** African prints, nightwear, Ghana, cultural perspectives, night of passion, romantic

## **1. Introduction**

Clothing, in general, plays a vital role in human society, serving not just as a means of covering the body but also as an expression of individual identity, cultural norms, and social status [1]. Clothing is in direct contact with the human skin, making it an integral part of daily life and offers protection from environmental elements, including heat, cold, and rain [2, 3]. Over time, the evolution of clothing has paralleled technological advancements and changes in societal values, highlighting its deep connection with human history and cultural development. [4, 5].

Nightwear, a component of clothing, plays a significant role in our lives due to its close and prolonged contact with the human body. This connection to clothing and nightwear can be appreciated because it significantly enhances sleep quality, leading to deeper and more restful sleep.

Valuckaite [6] inferred that nightwears are also a source of psychological comfort, providing a sense of relaxation and well-being. Like other forms of clothing, nightwear can be an expression of personal style and cultural practices. It varies widely across cultures and personal preferences, reflecting individuality even in the most private hours. Nightwear helps in maintaining a comfortable body temperature throughout the night. Different fabrics and designs are suited for various climates and seasons, contributing to a better sleep experience. However, the fashion industry has experienced a tremendous shift in recent years, with a significant increase in the diversity of fabrics, patterns, and designs [7]. African prints, in particular, are gaining increased attention for their intricate designs, vibrant colours, and cultural significance [8, 9]. Despite these prints' growing interest and recognition globally, their usage is limited to day wear, such as dresses, shirts, and accessories.

This lack of diversity in applying African prints for nightwear is both an underutilization of the fabric's potential and a missed opportunity for cultural representation. Specifically, the design and rendition of nightwear using African prints remains largely untouched. Again, African prints have a rich and complex history that spans multiple centuries, cultures, and continents. These prints have become a powerful symbol of African fashion and culture, and their popularity has spread across the globe. Traditionally, these prints were used to create clothing for special occasions, day-to-day wear, and traditional ceremonies, but the versatility of these textiles has

led to their application in various other fields, such as home decor, accessories, and, most recently, nightwear design [10, 11].

Ghana, in particular, has been at the forefront of promoting and utilizing African prints in fashion. With the emergence of global African fashion, the potential of African print usage in various design fields has become increasingly recognized [12, 13]. Despite the popularity of African prints, there's a paucity of studies focusing on the diversity of their usage, particularly in nightwear design. This is a significant gap in the existing literature. Using African prints in nightwear design can promote and perpetuate African culture, diversify the global fashion industry, and provide economic opportunities for African businesses [14]. The study, thus, seeks to identify and analyze the variety of African prints used in nightwear design in Ghana, examine consumer perceptions and preferences qualitatively regarding African print nightwear to appreciate the market demand and consumer attitudes towards nightwear made from African prints in Ghana and finally, design and produce some African prints nightwear to assess how the integration of African prints into nightwear design can influence the broader fashion industry in Ghana. These objectives are geared towards a comprehensive appreciation of integrating African prints into nightwear design from cultural, consumer, and industry perspectives.

## **2. Literature Review**

### ***2.1 Historical Roots and Cultural Significance of African Prints***

The history of African prints is as colourful as the designs themselves [15]. Originating from various regions across the continent, these prints carry stories of heritage, social status, and community identity. In Ghana, traditional fabrics like the Kente, originally worn by royalty, and Adinkra, known for its symbolic motifs [16, 17], have played significant roles in social and

ceremonial functions. Beyond their aesthetic appeal, African prints are imbued with deep cultural significance. Each pattern, colour, and motif is a narrative, often conveying messages, beliefs, and values integral to Ghanaian culture.

As inferred by Sawyerr et al. [18], African prints are not just visually striking patterns and colors; they carry profound cultural significance that reflects the rich history, traditions, and stories of the African continent and are imbued with deep cultural significance. African prints are adorned with intricate patterns and motifs that hold specific meanings within different African cultures. These symbols can represent various aspects of life, including fertility, spirituality, wisdom, bravery, and social status. Each pattern and colour combination may convey a unique message or narrative, making African prints a form of visual storytelling. Ankora [19] notes that African prints are a way for people to connect with their heritage and affirm their cultural identity. Many Africans wear traditional garments made from these prints during significant life events, including weddings, funerals, and festivals. These garments serve as a link to their ancestors and a celebration of their cultural roots.

Iliffe [20] points out that Africa is a vast continent with diverse ethnic groups, each with its own distinct traditions and designs. African prints vary significantly from one region to another, showcasing the continent's cultural diversity. African prints often feature stories, myths, and historical events through their designs [16, 21]. These prints serve as a form of oral history, passing down knowledge and stories from generation to generation. By wearing and using these fabrics, individuals contribute to preserving their culture's narratives. In some African societies, the type of fabric and its design can convey social status, wealth, or occupation. African prints have gained international recognition and are celebrated in fashion and design. Renowned

designers incorporate African print fabrics into their collections, showcasing their exquisiteness and cultural significance on global runways.

Tordzro [22] specified that African prints have transcended geographical boundaries and have been embraced by people from various cultural backgrounds. This cultural exchange fosters understanding and appreciation for African traditions and craftsmanship. Thus, African prints are not merely fabrics but living expressions of Africa's diverse cultures, histories, and identities. They serve as a tangible link between the past and present, connecting people to their roots and celebrating the beauty and depth of African heritage. Beyond their aesthetic appeal, African prints are a testament to the African continent's resilience, creativity, and cultural richness.

## ***2.2 The Nature of Nightwears***

The crux of this study focuses on the contemporary rendition of African prints in nightwear designs, highlighting how Ghanaians and other African designers can creatively reimagine traditional prints for a global audience while maintaining a solid connection to their roots. African nightwear is a fascinating and diverse aspect of African culture that reflects the continent's rich history, traditions, and the connection between clothing and comfort. Nightwear, also known as sleepwear, refers to clothing designed and worn for sleeping or lounging at home [23]. The nature of nightwear encompasses a range of styles, fabrics, and designs to provide comfort and relaxation during bedtime.

One of the primary purposes of nightwear is to ensure a comfortable and relaxing sleep [24, 25]. Nightwear is typically made from soft, breathable fabrics such as cotton, silk, satin, or jersey to enhance comfort. Loose-fitting designs minimize constriction during sleep. The nature of nightwear varies with the seasons. People often opt for warmer and more insulating materials like flannel or fleece in colder months. In contrast, lightweight and breathable fabrics are preferred in warmer climates to keep the body cool during sleep. Nightwear has evolved beyond purely functional clothing. Many nightwear items are designed with fashionable aesthetics [26, 27, 6]. This includes various prints, patterns, colours, and embellishments, allowing individuals to express their personal style even while asleep.

The nature of nightwear can vary across cultures [28]. Traditional nightwear in different regions may include kimonos, sarongs, or other culturally specific garments. Modern nightwear designs increasingly emphasize gender neutrality, with many styles suitable for all genders [29]. This shift reflects a broader trend towards inclusivity and diversity in fashion. With growing environmental awareness, eco-friendly and sustainable nightwear options have become more popular [30, 31]. These may be made from organic or recycled materials, emphasizing ethical and environmentally responsible production. Tullio-Pow et al. [26] infer that some nightwear is designed with specific health considerations, including cancer, maternity nightwear or post-surgery recovery garments. These designs prioritize comfort and support for individuals with unique needs.

Thus, the nature of nightwears are diverse and adaptable, catering to individual preferences, seasonal variations, and cultural influences. While primarily focused on comfort and relaxation during sleep, nightwear has evolved to incorporate fashion, sustainability, and inclusivity,

reflecting society's changing needs and values. Ultimately, the choice of nightwear is personal, allowing individuals to express their style and ensure a restful night's sleep.

### *2.2.1 The Nature of African Nightwears*

As indicated earlier, Africa is known for its incredible cultural diversity. This diversity extends to nightwear, where different regions and ethnic groups have their own unique styles. African nightwear is renowned for its intricate artistic embellishments. This can include hand embroidery, beadwork, or hand-painted designs. These decorations add beauty, tell stories, and convey cultural symbolism [33]. Africa's diverse climates play a significant role in shaping nightwear preferences. In hot and humid regions, lightweight and breathable fabrics are favoured, while in cooler areas, thicker and warmer materials are preferred [34]. African nightwear often includes gender-specific styles. Women's nightwear may feature flowing dresses, while those for men might include loose-fitting trousers and shirts. However, these distinctions are not rigid; many choose nightwear based on personal comfort and style.

While traditional African nightwear continues to be popular, modern influences have also made their mark. Western-style pyjamas and loungewear have become increasingly common, especially in urban areas. However, they often blend with traditional elements [35]. In some African cultures, nightwear holds special significance in rituals and ceremonies. It may be worn during initiation rites, weddings, or other cultural events, symbolizing life transitions or milestones [35, 36]. African nightwear also plays a role in promoting inclusivity and representation. Many designers focus on creating nightwear that celebrates African identities, including diverse skin tones, body types, and cultural backgrounds.

### *2.3 African Prints*

African prints are more than just fabric; they are a canvas of cultural stories, symbolism, and heritage [14, 15, 37]. The cultural significance of African prints in fashion extends far beyond mere aesthetics; it encompasses a rich tapestry of stories and tradition. African prints, often referred to as “Ankara” or “African wax prints,” have a history steeped in cultural exchange and global trade. These prints are characterized by their vibrant colours, bold patterns, and distinctive wax-resist dyeing technique. While the prints are now closely associated with African fashion, their origins can be traced back to Indonesia, where similar batik techniques were employed [38, 39]. Through the complex web of trade routes, including the trans-Saharan and trans-Atlantic slave trade, these fabrics made their way to Africa. As a result, African prints have become a symbol of resilience, adaptation, and cultural fusion.

African prints are not just visually appealing; they are laden with symbolism. The patterns and motifs on these fabrics often carry profound meanings related to life events, beliefs, and cultural values [14, 13]. These prints serve as a visual language communicating an individual’s identity and experiences. In Ghana, African prints have a long-standing tradition of use in various aspects of life. They are commonly worn during important ceremonies and celebrations, such as weddings, festivals, and funerals [22]. The choice of print and design can convey specific messages or affiliations within the community.

The integration of African prints into nightwear design, which this study seeks to achieve, will be a contemporary expression of this cultural legacy. It will represent a shift from the traditional use of these prints in formal and ceremonial attire to a more everyday context. This evolution signifies a desire to embrace and celebrate African heritage daily, not just on special occasions. Nightwear adorned with African prints allows individuals to carry a piece of their cultural identity, even in the most intimate and private moments. Socio-cultural factors deeply influence

the choice to wear African print nightwear. It reflects a sense of pride in one's African heritage, a desire to connect with traditions, and a celebration of diversity. Moreover, it challenges Western-centric beauty standards and fashion norms, promoting inclusivity and self-expression.

By integrating traditional prints into nightwear, a new narrative is being woven that bridges the gap between past and present, tradition and innovation. This fusion is a fashion statement and a testament to African culture's dynamic and evolving nature. It raises important questions about cultural authenticity, globalization, and the role of fashion in cultural expression. The conclusion will reflect on how this trend might shape future trends in African and global fashion. This study thus delves into the rich tapestry of Ghanaian heritage, exploring the integration of African prints into nightwear design.

### **3. Materials and Methods**

The purpose of this study is to produce nightwear from suitable African prints. The motivation was to create high-end, suitable nightwear to enhance the clients' femininity and intimacy at a competitive price. The study, therefore, adopted a studio base and qualitative research approach modelled on market and current nightwear fashion trend analysis, fashion innovation and production. Studio-based research is an approach that emphasizes the creative process, practical experimentation, and hands-on exploration as a means of generating new knowledge and insights.

Studio-based research is practice-oriented, focusing on the practical aspects of creative work. It often involves artists, designers, or other practitioners actively creating and making things as part of the research process. Thus, the approach was utilized to design and produce three (3) different

African print nightwears. The approach encouraged exploring and experimenting with various materials, techniques, and creative processes. It also aimed to generate new knowledge, insights, and understanding through creative practice. The primary data collection instruments used to assess the produced nightwears were one-on-one interviews with ten (10) consumers, five (5) fashion designers, three (3) textile industry experts, and two (2) fashion economists selected purposefully to understand their perceptions, preferences, and acceptance of African prints in nightwear. Thus, a series of nightwear designs integrating African prints and experimenting with colour, pattern, and fabric was created, and the design process, from concept development to final product, was documented.

#### **4. Results and Discussions**

##### ***4.1 Designed and produced nightwears***

The title Romantic Collection is inspired by the theme Night of Passion.



*Figure 1: Theme Board*

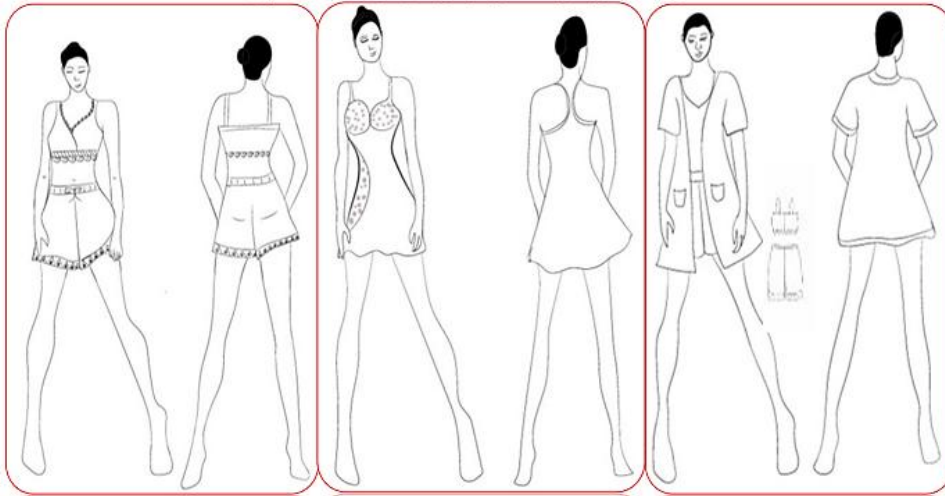


Figure 2: Sketch board the three designs



Figure 3: Design boards the three designs

The design board in Figure 3 illustrates the front and back views of the designs with fabric and colours.



*Figure 4: Design on a mannequin in a two-dimensional view*

The first design shown in Figure 4 is an overlapped front opening with strapped sleeves for nightwear. It has a 'V' neckline; the design was finished with cotton white lace trimmings. The fabric used to construct the nightwear was an all-over motif African print fabric.



*Figure 5: Design on a mannequin in a two-dimensional view*

The second design shown in Figure 5 consists of a bustier 'V' neckline with a strapped sleeve; cotton lace fabric was used to enhance the design at the side and the bustier. The design was made in an all-over motif African print fabric and white spandex lace.



*Figure 6: Design on a mannequin in a two-dimensional view*

The third design on the mannequin consists of three views: front, back, and morning coat, as well as the inner garments of the nightwear. The inner has a round ‘V’ neckline, while the kimono-sleeved morning coat has a self-belted attached. The fabric used was an all-over motif African print fabric. The collection was inspired by the theme *Night of Passion* and the fashion trends of existing nightwear, and the resultant colour story was derived from the theme board of a beautiful blend of pink flowers, which also determined the mood and has been featured skilfully in the fashion look created. Collections are typically inspired by a theme and developed based on factors like colour, fabric, design details, or a purpose that links the items together.

Thus, the collection’s colourful nature gives the designer’s fashion direction. The blend of colours is bound to cause joy for both the wearers and their beloved beholders and to add to the ambience of the rather sensual evening. The *Romantic* collection was unique but also reflects the trends reviewed and gives the customers options to play with when preparing for their night.

The collection silhouettes showed varied lengths of mini nightwears and mini shorts seamed on the waistline, drawing attention to the figure of the clients. Design *one*, an overlapped stripped cropped top with an elasticated shorts design, was made of African print fabric for comfortability

and free movement. The top torsos, underbust, and flared skirt portraying fullness of the hip are all above the knee-length. Design *two* is a bustier flared design with a stripe. Design *three*: a kimono sleeve overcoat and a loose 'V' neck. The inner part of the design had a round shape at the hem.

Colour is essential, as it evokes the consumer's emotions and is frequently the driving force behind consumers' decision to purchase a garment. In the fashion industry, colour has always been crucial, and it has even entered common vocabulary to invoke ideas of various outfits ideal for specific occasions and use. These young adult women prefer colours such as pink, yellow, purple, brown and sea blue.

Even though the *Night of Passion* collection featured single silhouettes regarding dress components, all the designs showed different concepts typical of the 1990s to 2000 baby-doll nightwear dress trends which inspired the collection. The drama of that period is distinguishable in the *Night of Passion* collection. Function and fashion are present in the various components of each style.

#### ***4.2 Analysis of Consumers' Responses***

According to the results, only 19.9% of the respondents wore traditional pyjamas for sleeping, 38.1% wore shirts and shorts, and the remaining 42% preferred to sleep in underwear. Considering shirts and shorts, none of the interviewees who preferred to wear pyjamas, nightwear, or underwear considered wearing shirts and shorts to sleep because it would not provide them comfort. Additionally, the majority of interviewees specified that they desire simple African print nightwear because of the value it gives them. This essential product

attribute, “comfort”, was named the most significant product quality when considering what should be worn for sleeping. In this case, most interviewees want nightwear in African print but at a moderate price; they also prefer it in a sexy style that can attract their spouse, and some also indicated they would prefer their African print nightwear if it’s fashionable and trending. Selected response has been outlined below;

*“That [cotton] would be a lot better. But I just feel that sometimes the design that they have in the stores is either with a big Hello Kitty something on the front, and I am way too old for that, or it’s with Mickey Mouse, and it’s like no way ever, so African print nightwear will be way better for me.”*

*“Well, nightgowns tend to be more either for small children or old women, so as a young lady, a nightgown with some floral design will feel more mature...”*

*“Night clothing is usually what I wear before going to bed. Just when sitting on the couch watching TV.”*

*“I have a nighty in satin, but it is only when I have to be feminine.”*

On the economic impact of using African prints in the nightwear industry: the ensuing are some responses from some fashion designers:

*“Integrating African prints into our nightwear collection can have a significant positive impact on my business. Customers are increasingly looking for unique and culturally inspired designs. We can boost our sales and customer engagement fortunes by incorporating African prints. This*

*will translate into higher revenues for our business, and we can expand our product line to meet the growing demand for African-inspired nightwear.”*

*“From an economic perspective, using African prints in the nightwear industry can be seen as a smart move. African prints are not only visually appealing but also carry cultural significance. This uniqueness allows brands to charge premium prices for such products. Moreover, it opens up new markets and customer segments, contributing to industry growth. It also supports African artisans and textile producers, creating a positive economic impact globally.”*

*“African prints can gain popularity in the nightwear industry due to their vibrant colours and unique patterns. This will drive demand for African textiles, benefiting textile producers on the continent. The increased demand will also lead to innovations in production techniques, reducing costs and increasing efficiency. This trend will not only support the nightwear industry but also contribute to the growth of the textile sector.”*

*“As a consumer, I can say that I’m more inclined to purchase nightwear with African prints. It is not just about comfort but also about expressing my appreciation for diverse cultures through fashion. I’m willing to pay a bit more for such unique and culturally rich designs, which ultimately contribute to the industry’s economic growth.”*

These responses highlight the positive economic impact of incorporating African prints into the nightwear industry, including increased sales, market expansion, artisans support, and textile sector growth.

## **5. Conclusion, implications and limitations**

The exploration of the integration of African prints into nightwear design in Ghana has revealed several key findings and implications. Firstly, clothing, including nightwear, plays a vital role in human society, expressing individual identity, cultural norms, and social status. Nightwear, in particular, contributes to sleep quality and provides psychological comfort. African prints, known for their intricate designs and cultural significance, have gained global attention. However, their usage has been primarily limited to daywear, leaving a gap in applying these prints to nightwear.

Ghana, a hub for African fashion, has the potential to promote and perpetuate African culture, diversify the global fashion industry, and provide economic opportunities by integrating African prints into nightwear design.

The findings include creating a unique Romantic collection inspired by the theme “Night of Passion.” The collection features a range of nightwear designs, each incorporating African prints with a blend of vibrant colours. These designs reflect fashion trends and offer wearers comfort, style, and sensuality. Consumer responses indicate a preference for comfortable and stylish nightwear, with some expressing a desire for African print nightwear that is both culturally inspired and fashionable. This suggests a potential market for African print nightwear among consumers. From an economic perspective, integrating African prints into the nightwear industry can positively impact sales, market expansion, artisans support, and textile sector growth.

Regarding the study’s implications, incorporating African prints into nightwear design allows for preserving and celebrating African culture. These prints carry deep cultural significance and stories; using them in nightwear ensures these traditions are passed down to future generations. It also represents an opportunity to showcase African heritage on a global scale. Again, using African prints in nightwear diversifies the global fashion industry. It challenges Western-centric

beauty standards and fashion norms by promoting inclusivity and self-expression. It encourages the acceptance of diverse cultural aesthetics and contributes to a more inclusive fashion landscape.

Integrating African prints into nightwear can have positive economic impacts as it could create opportunities for African businesses involved in textile production and fashion design. The unique and culturally rich designs can command premium prices, benefiting designers and artisans. This can lead to industry growth and job creation. Also, understanding consumer preferences is essential for the fashion industry. The study found that consumers desire African print nightwear that is comfortable, moderately priced, and stylish. This information can guide designers and manufacturers in meeting consumer demands and creating products that resonate with their target audience.

African prints have transcended geographical boundaries and are embraced by people from various cultural backgrounds. This could foster cultural exchange and understanding as individuals worldwide appreciate and connect with African traditions and craftsmanship through fashion. Finally, integrating African prints into nightwear design requires creativity and innovation. Designers must experiment with colour, pattern, and fabric to create appealing and comfortable nightwear. Consumer responses highlighted the importance of comfort in nightwear. While the aesthetic appeal of African prints is crucial, the nightwear must also provide a comfortable sleeping experience. Balancing style and comfort is a challenge that designers need to address.

The study's sample size for consumer interviews and designer perspectives was limited. A larger and more diverse sample could afford a more comprehensive understanding of consumer

preferences and market potential. Furthermore, the study focused on Ghana, which may have unique cultural and fashion trends. The findings may not be directly applicable to other regions; again, while there is potential for economic benefits, the impact on businesses may vary depending on marketing strategies, production costs, and market demand. Conducting a thorough economic analysis to assess the feasibility of integrating African prints into nightwear design is essential. Fashion trends are also subject to change, and what is fashionable today may not be in the future. The study's designs were inspired by past trends, and their long-term popularity is uncertain.

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