METHODS USED TO APPLY INTERFACING FABRICS AMONG SMALL SCALE GARMENT PRODUCERS IN LAPAZ-ACCRA

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this study was to describe methods used by small scale garment producers in Lapaz-Accra to apply interfacing to their product. The study was conducted using twenty five (25) tailors and twenty five (25) seamstresses in Lapaz-Accra. Interview schedule and observation checklist were used to collect data from the small scale garment producers. Percentages were used to analyse the data collected. The result of the study revealed that, lapped seam method of joining interfacing, lapped dart method of reducing bulk at interfaced sections and applying interfacings before joining various sections of the garments together were popular methods used by respondents during application of interfacings. It is recommended that the findings be made available to the respondents and Council for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (COTVET) so that the small scale garment producers would be educated on garment interfacing application procedures to build their capacity.

Keywords: Interfacings; Dart; Seams; Garment Construction; COTVET; Lapaz-Accra

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The garment industry is a major contributor to several national economies, including both small- and large-scale processes globally. Abernathy, Volpe, and Weil (2004) argued that, with concern to the employment as well as production, the garment sector is one of the prime industries in the world. The garment sector is a labour-oriented one and provides enormous job opportunities at the entry level for unskilled labour in developed as well as developing nations. Further, it is a sector where comparatively modern technologies could be implemented even in poor countries at moderately low investment costs (Ashdown 1998). It is necessary to know the techniques of sewing for producing attractive garments with good fit. Garment making is thus a technical accomplishment that requires knowledge of fabrics, principles of clothing construction and skills involved in it.

Different methods are used during the application of interfacing in garment construction. Interfacing can be applied by sewing it in or fusing it to the garment. The type of interfacing selected determines the application method. Darts included in interfacings for jackets and coats which cover large section of the bodice are made as flat as possible to reduce bulk with the use of edge to edge dart, herringbone stitched dart or lapped dart (Kindersley, 2003). Kindersley further described the methods used to make darts flat in interfacings as:

Fig. 1: Edge to edge dart
Source: Kindersley (2003)

Fig. 2: Herringbone- stitched dart
Source: Kindersley (2003)

Figure 1: Edge to edge dart is flat and is used on non-fraying interfacings. The dart is cut out and a strip of underlay from seam tape or fabric is placed under the dart with the cut edges of the dart positioned in the centre of the fabric or seam tape and machine stitched 3mm around the dart from the edges.

Figure 2: Herringbone- stitched dart: The interfacing dart is cut out and placed on the garment piece. The garment dart is then pulled up between the cut edges and each side of the cut edges of the interfacing dart is herringbone-stitched to the garment dart over the line of dart stitching, working from the raw edges of the garment up to the point of the dart and back down to the other side.

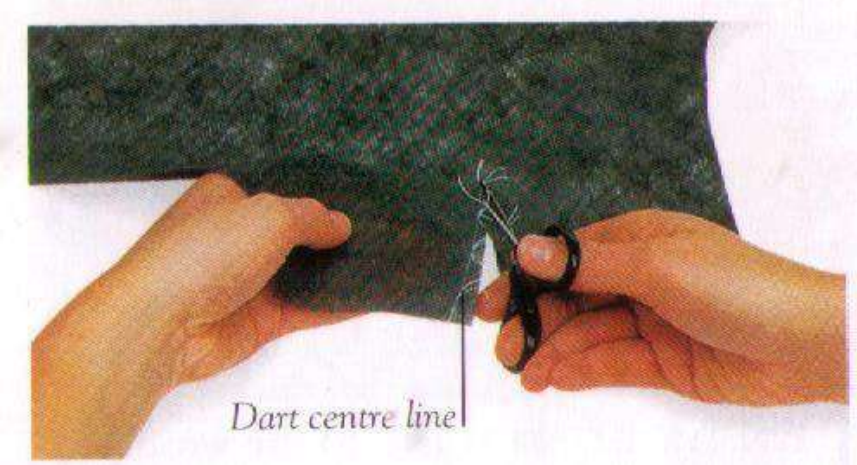

Fig. 3: Lapped dart
Source: Kindersley (2003)

Figure 3: Lapped dart method is often used for frayable fabrics and is not as flat as the edge to edge dart. A slit is cut along the centre of the dart with the cut edges overlapped so that the dart stitching line are on top of each other; the dart stitching line is then stitched close, wide, three step zigzag or ordinary zigzag stitch and the interfacing on both sides trimmed close to the stitching line.

Seams are made in non-woven interfacings either to make up the length for a long facing or to use the interfacing economically. To keep the joint as flat as possible so that it does not show on the finished garment, the interfacing fabric is butted together or overlapped and trimmed (Kindersley, 2003). Kindersley further described seams

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used in joining interfacings as edge to edge seam, edge to edge zigzag seam, Lapped seam and overlapped zigzag seams:

Fig. 4A: Edge to edge seam

Fig. 4B: Edge to edge seam

Source: Dean (2015)

Figure 4 shows edge to edge seam; the seam allowances of the edges of the interfacings to be joined are trimmed with the edges placed together over an underlay strip of lightweight interfacing or fabric and machine stitched.

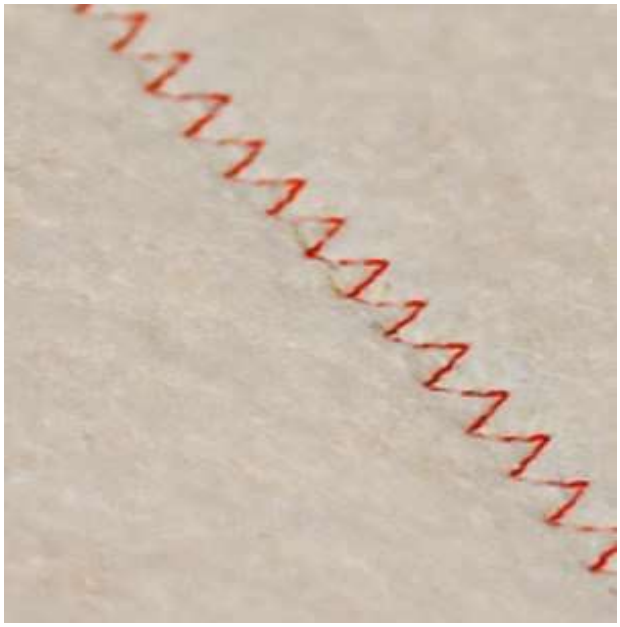

Fig 5. Edge to edge zigzag seam
Source: Sewing Solution and Techniques (2021)

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Fig. 6 Lapped seam
Source: Heaton and Baker (2014)

Figure 5 shows edge to edge zigzag seam, the seam allowances are trimmed and the edges of the interfacing place over an underlay and zigzag stitched catching both edges. Sometimes the underlay of an edge to edge zigzag seam is omitted to form a flatter joint (Kindersley, 2003)

Lapped seams (fig. 6) may also be used. In this case the edges of the seam allowances are overlapped, aligning the seam lines and two rows of straight stitch of about 2mm apart are stitched along the centre of the overlap and the seam allowances on both sides trimmed close to the stitching line (Kindersley, 2003).

Fig. 7: Overlapped zigzag seam
Source: Kindersley (2003)

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Overlapped zigzag (fig. 7) seam may also be used to join interfacing pieces. The edges of the seam allowance are overlapped with the seamline aligned and zigzag stitching made in the centre of the overlapped edges and the seam allowances trimmed on both sides of the zigzag stitching line (Kindersley, 2003).

Patson (2009) indicated that the benefit of sew-in interfacing is that it gives softer and supple shaping and may also be used with woven and knit fabrics. Light weight and medium weight interfacings are applied to separate garment pieces before joining the interfaced units together or the interfacing pieces joined and applied as a unit to the corresponding seamed garment units (Komives, 1990; 1992). Shaeffer (2008) explained that heavyweight sew-in interfacings are stitched either to the garment or the facing with seam allowances trimmed before the interfacing is hand stitched in place with herringbone stitches and machine stitched along the seam line close to the trimming. Seam allowances of heavy weight sew-in interfacings that are too thick to be stitched into the facing seams are replaced with a strip of organdie, a very lightweight interfacing or another fine fabric to reduce bulk at seamlines (Kindersley, 2003).

Clotilde (2004) on the other hand indicated that sew-in interfacings are trimmed in the corners and machine stitched 0.3cm outside the given seam line, then trimmed close to the machine stitching to reduce bulk. The finished sections are then top-stitched to secure the interfacing in place as observed by Shaeffer (2008). Some weaknesses of sew-in interfacings are that sew-in interfacings may shrink, a non-woven sew-in interfacing may buckle in an area such as collar where the interfacing is too heavy for the fabric and completely enclosed, some sew-in interfacings soften after washing and they also need machine or hand pad stitching for firm shaping (Patson, 2009).

Komives (1990) opined that fusible interfacings are used on garment's facing not on the outside piece. She further explained that if it is not possible to apply interfacing to the garment's facing, the entire garment piece should be interfaced to avoid a ridge line. Fusible interfacings are applied so that 0.3cm is caught in the seam allowance to

make the seam stronger and reduce bulk while allowing the interfacing to be held by the seam. In addition, corners of fabric that do not ravel are trimmed away diagonally 0.6cm. Darts are cut out from the fusible interfacing pattern piece to eliminate bulk (Komives, 1990). Clotilde (2004) specified that seam allowances and an extra 0.3cm of fusible interfacings should be trimmed away to reduce bulk and ensure that interfacing is not visible around the edges of collars after the collar has been stitched in place. On light weight fabrics, lighter weight and fusible interfacings are recommended for use on both sides of collar, cuff and waistband instead of applying one heavier interfacing to one side (Komives, 1990; 1992).

Komives (1992) pointed out that the manufacturer's instructions be followed in applying fusible interfacings since some fusible interfacings fuse with steam and others fuse with dry iron. Komives (1992) mentioned temperature, moisture, time and pressure as considerations for applying fusible interfacings. Steam setting is ideal for wool whereas silk setting is recommended for low temperature fusible interfacings. With reference to moisture steam or dry iron are used with either damp or dry press cloth. Komives indicated further that heat applied to light weight fusible interfacings last between 10-12 seconds and 15 seconds for heavier weight fusible interfacings bearing in mind that some interfacings require firm pressure to force the heat-sensitive resin into both interfacing and garment fabric. Patson (2009) argued that the fusing may not hold and result in a puckered and bubbled look if manufacturer's instructions are not followed. Fusible interfacings generally adhere best to fabrics that are fairly flat with little surface texture (Komives, 1992).

2.0 METHODOLOGY

The study was mixed method study which used a descriptive survey design due to its flexibility; this method can use either qualitative or quantitative data or both. Descriptive research involves collecting data in order to test hypothesis or answer questions concerning the current status of the subject of the study (Creswell, 2009). According to Polit and Hungler (1995), descriptive survey aims predominantly at describing, observing and documenting aspects of a situation as it naturally occurs

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rather than explaining them. A descriptive survey involves asking the same set of questions to a large number of individuals. It is appropriate when a researcher attempts to describe some aspect of a population by selecting unbiased samples of individuals who are asked to complete questionnaires, interviews or tests (Frankel & Wallen, 2000). The study looked at the methods used by small scale garment producers in applying interfacings to their products in Lapaz-Accra. It is against this background that the descriptive survey design was used to achieve the objective of the study.

2.1 Population

The target population for the study was all small-scale garment producers in Lapaz-Accra. These stakeholders constituted the population because they directly made use of interfacing fabrics in garment production at their workshop.

2.2 Sample and Sampling Technique

In order to arrive at the sample size for the study, convenience and snowball sampling which are non-probability sampling techniques were employed in selecting a total of fifty (50) respondents made up of twenty five (25) tailors and twenty five (25) seamstresses in Lapaz-Accra. The basis of selecting fifty respondents as the sample size for the study is in tandem with Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2000) submission that a sample size of thirty is a minimum number if researchers plan to perform statistical computation with the data. Convenience sampling or, as it is sometimes called, accidental or opportunity sampling involves choosing the nearest individuals to serve as respondents and continuing that process until the required sample size has been obtained, or those who happen to be available and accessible at the time (Cohen et al., 2000). Researchers simply choose the sample from those to whom they have easy access. As it does not represent any group apart from itself, it does not seek to generalize about the wider population (Cohen et al.). In snowball sampling researchers identify a small number of individuals who have the characteristics in which they are

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Interested. These people are then used as informants to identify, or put the researchers in touch with, others who qualify for inclusion and these, in turn, identify yet others hence the term snowball sampling (Cohen et al., 2000).

In this study, one of the researchers, being a fashion designer who lives in Lapaz, happens to know three of the respondents who were initially chosen as the main contact persons in this study. These respondents also introduced other seamstresses and tailors. The introduction continued until the target of 50 respondents was reached.

3.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Method Used By Garment Producers in Applying Interfacings to Their Products

Table 1. Interfacing Application Methods used by Respondents (n = 50)

Preparation and application processes	Frequency
Lapped seam was used to join interfacing	50
Lapped dart method was used to reduce bulk	46
Interfacing was applied before sewing various sections	45
Interfacing was cut smaller than the area to be interfaced	43
Interfacing was applied to facing and not to the fashion fabric	40
Corners of fusible interfacing were trimmed to reduce bulk	38
Edge to edge dart method was used to reduce bulk	35
Edge to edge seam was used to join interfacing	23
Press cloth was used during application of fusible interfacing	10
Overlap zigzag seam was used to join interfacing	9
Edge to edge zigzag seam was used to join interfacing	1

*Multiple responses

Table 1 gives information on interfacing of garment application methods used by the respondents. All the respondents confirmed that they applied interfacing fabric by the use of lapped seam method to reduce bulk when there is a seam in the interfacing. This finding is also in line with Kindersley's assertion that lapped seam method is used to reduce bulk when there is a seam in the interfacing. As many as 92% respondents affirmed, that they applied interfacing fabric by the use of lapped dart method to reduce bulk when there is a dart in the interfaced section. Some respondents were seen using the lapped dart method during the observation at the workshops to reduce bulk in interfaced sections with darts. This finding is also in line with Kindersley's (2003) advice that darts included in interfacings for jackets and coats which cover large section of the bodice are made as flat as possible to reduce bulk with the use of lapped dart method.

It was observed that majority of the respondents (90%) applied interfacing before sewing various sections of the garment together. The respondents explained that "applying interfacings to the various sections needing interfacing before joining them together made their work easier and simple and also gives the work a neat appearance".

Komives (1992) stated that light weight and medium weight interfacings are applied to separate garment pieces before joining the interfaced units together, or the interfacing pieces are joined and applied as a unit to the corresponding seamed garment units. It was observed in this study that different weights of vilene, thus lightweight, medium and heavyweight were used by all the respondents. Sew-in interfacings used by the respondents had no variation in weight. There was no variation in weight for canvas, lawn, muslin, calico, grey-baft and bastite.

Eighty-six percent (86%) affirmed, whereas that they cut interfacing fabric smaller than the area to be interfaced. This outcome confirm Patson's (2009) observation that most interfacings are narrower than their fabric counterparts. In the same way Creative Publishing International (2009) also advised that garment producers should trim 0.6cm to 1cm from the interfacing seam allowances to help eliminate bulk. Majority of the respondents in this case were therefore doing the right thing. Majority (80%) of the respondents applied interfacing on the facing, while 20% applied it on the garment

fabric itself. The respondents explained that "applying interfacing on the facing of the garment made their garments look more professional," while others also said that, "that is what we learnt from our masters". Kindersley (2003) explained that light and medium weight sew-in interfacing are stitched to the facing however, the interfacing works most effectively when stitched directly behind the garment fabric and on top of the seam allowances. In this instance it is preferable to interface the garment itself rather than the facing.

At the respondents' workshops, 76% respondents were observed trimming corners of fusible interfacing to reduce bulk, while 24% did not do so. This findings is in line with Clotilde (2004) who specified that seam allowances and an extra 0.3cm of fusible interfacings should be trimmed away to reduce bulk and ensure that interfacing is not visible around the edges of collars after the collar has been stitched in place.

Also, 70% respondents agreed that they applied interfacing by the use of edge to edge dart method to reduce bulk when there is a dart in the interfaced section. It was observed at the workshop that respondents A9 and B4 used edge-to-edge dart method to reduce bulk in their garment with a dart in the interfaced sections. Respondents B21, A4 and A18 did not used edge-to-edge dart method or any of the methods to reduce bulk though there were darts in the interfaced sections of the garments they were sewing. Kindersley's (2003) advised that darts included in interfacings for jackets and coats which cover large sections of the bodice should be made as flat as possible to reduce bulk with the use of edge to edge dart method of reducing bulk. Hence, darts and seam portions of garments made by respondents who never observed the trimming rules were bulky.

A small percentage of the respondents (46%) consented that they applied interfacing fabric by the use of edge to edge seam method to reduce bulk when there is a seam in the interfacing. It was observed that 20% respondents used press cloth while 80% did not use it during application of fusible interfacings. The finding differs from Patson's (2009) observation that press cloth should be placed over the area to be fused to prevent the interfacing from getting stacked on the iron plate.

Eighteen percent (18%) respondents indicated that they applied interfacing fabric by the use of overlap zigzag seam method to reduce bulk when there is a seam in the interfacing. This finding differs from Kindersley's (2003) method of using overlap zigzag seam method to reduce bulk when there is a seam in the interfacing. The respondents explained that "when joining fusible interfacing they slightly overlapped the edges together and ironed to make the edges stick together to make up for the length of interfacing required". Kindersley (2003) also said that seams are made in interfacings either to make up the length for a long facing or to use the interfacing economically. Though the respondents did not make any seams they overlapped and ironed on their fusible interfacings for the needed extension.

Only 2% applied interfacing fabric by using edge to edge zigzag seam method to reduce bulk when there is a seam in the interfacing. This result opposes Kindersley's assertion that edge-to-edge and edge-to-edge zig-zag seam methods are used to reduce bulk when there is a seam in the interfacing. None of the respondents used herringbone-stitched dart method to reduce bulk in in the interfaced sections with dart though it could have been used in place of any of the methods used in reducing bulk in an interfaced sections of garments with darts.

The respondents top-stitched collars, waistbands, cuffs and buttons extensions interfaced with both sew-in and fusible interfacings as observed by the researcher at their workshops. None of the respondents replaced seam allowances of heavy weight sew-in interfacings with strip of light weight interfacings to reduce bulk. This finding deviates from Kindersley's (2003) assertion that seam allowances of heavy weight sew-in interfacings are too thick to be stitched into the facing seams, hence, they are replaced with a strip of organdie, a very lightweight interfacing or another fine fabric to reduce bulk at the seamlines. Clotilde (2004) on the other hand indicated that sew-in interfacings are trimmed in the corners and machine stitched 0.3cm outside the given seam line, then trimmed close to the machine stitching to reduce bulk. The finished sections are then top-stitched to secure the interfacing in place as observed by Shaeffer

(2008). All the respondents (100%) never used washing, steaming, dry cleaning and immersion in water as pre-shrinking methods when applying interfacings to garment.

4.0 CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the study it is concluded that: Lapped seam method of joining interfacing, lapped dart method of reducing bulk at interfaced sections and applying interfacings before joining various sections of the garments together were popular methods used by respondents during application of interfacings. Edge to edge zig zag and overlapped zig zag seams were less used by the respondents.

5.0 RECOMMENDATION

In the light of the findings of this study, it is suggested that the findings be made available to the respondents and COTVET so that the small scale garment producers would be educated on: Garment interfacing application procedures to build their capacity.

6.0 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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