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PREVALENCE OF COPYCAT IN AFRICA TEXTILE CLUSTERS: THE BLAME GAME AMONG STAKEHOLDERS

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Abstract. In this paper we investigate the reasons behind the pirated textiles and try to address the questions of why copycats are rampant on the African textile market, their impact on textile clusters and why it is ineffectively being controlled. Taking Ghana as a sample, this study employed grounded theory methodology to explore the key factors that account for copycat prevalence in African textile industry. This study reveals that economic foundations, political factors and stakeholder interactions in the textile ecosystem have influenced copycat popularity in Africa. More specifically, the blame game among stakeholders with no one accepting responsibility for copycat prevalence gave space for perpetrators of copycat textiles to breed. The study extends the stakeholder and cluster theories particularly within the confines of developing regions, the interplay of actors and how their actions promote or revert the fight against copycats. This article implores governments should proactively lead in collaborative inter-agency actions to fight the copycat menace by repackaging and designing strategies/approaches through the employment and increasing of stakeholder consultations.

Keywords: copycat problem, African textile clusters, blame game, grounded theory, stakeholder, government policy.

JEL Classification: L67, L17, L1.

Introduction

For past decades the textile industry has been the engine for industrialization in most African economies. Due to the great contributions to economy and employment, countries such as Ethiopia, Nigeria, South Africa and Sudan had developed their textile industries to boost their national development (Adinew, 2012; Kriger, 1993; Renne, 2015). However, many textile industries have been threatened in recent years. A study conducted by Egu (2009) confirmed

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this declining trend of the textile industry in Africa and attributed this transformation to internal bottlenecks as well as the continuous proliferation of pirated textiles. Trade liberalization over the years has resulted in the influx of pirated textiles especially from Asia, which are comparatively cheap and have negatively affected sales, total production and employment of local textile manufacturing companies (Abor & Quartey, 2010). Vego (2009) attributes copycat to the extensive global trade through the revolution in communication and businesses resulting from the internet and e-commerce, unstable political and economic activities of nations, corrupt officials and lack of political will on the part of governments. Considering that patronizing imitated product is an expense to producers of original goods, it has been becoming a devastating issue and an important focus in international trade (Andersson, 2009; Blackstone, Fuhr, & Pociask, 2014).

Unfortunately, the response to dealing with copycats has been slow and weak. The Design Piracy Protection Act (DPPA) which was introduced in the United States of America in 2007 to amend the Copyright Act of 1976 to protect the fashion industry had a lot of criticisms (Weisburd, Albert, & Kudowitz, 2009). BASCAP (Business Action to Stop Counterfeiting and Piracy) reported that the value of copycat globally would worth of \$1. 77 trillion in 2015 and was expected to increase by 22% annually (Cesareo & Pastore, 2015). These trends and projections make it important to combat this phenomenon. In view of such projections and trends, we posit the following research questions: why are copycat textiles so rampant in Africa textile markets? How do copycats influence the development of textile clusters? Why is it difficult to be controlled?

Taking Ghana as a sample, this research tries to address the above questions by investigating the reasons behind the prevalence of pirated textiles in African markets, evaluate the impact of copycats on the textile clusters sustainability and find out why the government policy and task force to mitigate the phenomenon did not work. To mitigate copycat textiles, the Ghana government inaugurated a task force with the mandate of clamping down traders involved in this illegal act to discourage this practice (GNA, 2010b). However their efforts have proved futile as pirated textiles are still popular in the market and have gradually taken over. Our findings reveals that various factors from economic, political and stakeholder interactions in the textile ecosystem have influenced copycat popularity in Africa. More specifically, the blame game among stakeholders with no one accepting responsibility for copycat prevalence gave space for perpetrators of copycat textiles to breed. This led to the ineffectiveness of government efforts in controlling copycat textiles and the subsequent decline of the clusters since there is no display of any strong coordination and control mechanisms among the collective actors. Insights into these events will transform the actors' role leading to a dynamic change in limiting copycats in African textile clusters. This study explores the copycat prevalence in the industrial textile clusters, attributing it mainly to the blame games in the textile clusters within the African terrain.

This study contributes to the cluster theory by enriching the cluster life-cycle literature in elaborating the reasons of the cluster declining in developing countries. Most of previous studies concentrate on advantages and growth of industrial clusters in growing as well as matured stages (Meng & Forman, 2016; Mok, Shen, Yang, & Li, 2017). Our research fills the gap on the cluster decline in Africa from the copycat perspective. In addition, concerning

the stakeholder theory, the study highlights another kind of relationship considering the blame game concept amongst stakeholders and how it is modelled to explain their interactivities which has contributed to the present state of the clusters. This lack in the stakeholder literature makes this study a maiden application of the blame game concept relating to the decline of the textile industry.

The paper is arranged in this order: following the introduction, Section 1 reviews literature on copycat, industrial cluster and stakeholder. Then Section 2 presents the methodology including sample selection and data collection; later Section 3 reports the analysis process and the results; Section 4 discusses the findings with the conclusions at the end of paper.

1. Literature review

1.1. Copycat

Copycat, with diverse names such as an illegal replica, a pirated good, an imitation and a look alike, is a common phenomenon in business spanning through architectural, pharmaceutical, software, music etc. The United States Trademark Act, Title 15, Code 1127 quoted in Yoo and Lee (2004) defines copycat as an imitational mark that duplicate a registered one. Similarly, the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) by World Trade Organization defines a copycat product as “any goods, including packaging, bearing without authorization a trademark which is identical to the trademark validly registered in respect of such goods, or which cannot be distinguished in its essential aspects from such a trademark, and which thereby infringes the rights of the owner of the trademark in question, under the law of the country of importation.” Such pronouncements make copycat activities in terms of production, distributing or selling pirated goods illegal. In this paper, copycat refers to the imitation of designs and appearances of innovated products, which is the process/practice of mimicking an originally produced design without any official permission and producing with a different label.

While some researchers appreciate copycat as normal with the social gains of serving the market segment which otherwise could not demand for original products and may help originators to be on their toes and extract genuine customers through price discrimination (Andersson, 2009; Che, Qiu, & Zhou, 2009), others perceive it as hostile, illegal, theft, a threat to company's survival, a disincentive to multinationals wanting to invest in developing countries and a global problem which if not tackled could damage some societies (Blackstone et al., 2014; C. Chen, C. Chen, & Yeh, 2010; Vego, 2009), which is the case in African textile clusters as posited by Egu (2009) and Renne (2015). As Toverud, Hartmann, and Håkonsen (2015) argue, the ability of an imitational product to serve as a better equity depends on the perspective of the final user. Researchers admit copycat can distort both the short and long term investments of creators and has the tendency to decrease local productivity and revenue worsening unemployment, poverty and corruption (Miceli & Pieters, 2010; Esmaeili & Noori, 2016). Firms generally are afraid of copycats as consumers normally take similarity to mean substitutability. Considering this, if a copycat is able to diminish the patronage of original products then there is certainly a calibration problem especially in developing countries

where there is the presence of market imperfections due to information asymmetry between local manufacturers and local customers vis-à-vis foreign products alongside a weak enforcement of Intellectual Property Right (IPR) (Che, Qiu, & Zhou, 2009; Warlop & Alba, 2004).

Prevalence and patronage of pirated products do have some damaging effects in that the original manufacturer whose IPR has been infringed loose revenue to copycat producers whereas the nation will lose foreign investors as there is no guarantee of recouping investments. Pirated products may also create possible health and safety risk (Blackstone et al., 2014; Jayaraman, 2010; Yoo & Lee, 2004). Economically, the deep price differential between original products and copycats and income level of consumers compel them to willingly demand for imitation to satisfy their needs at a preferred price and that has been the root of an enormous market for pirated products worldwide (Yao, 2006). Politically, bureaucracy in launching patents, regulatory bodies not streamlined well to discharge their duties and local governments protecting pirated goods and markets for tax revenue sake are some of the factors that fuel piracy (Gaur & Tripathi, 2012; Thakur & Ramacha, 2012; Yao, 2006). However, mitigating copycat products in some countries has been met with reproaches (Weisburd et al., 2009).

Vego (2009) urges a conscious effort on the part of regional governments and international community to collaborate and uproot copycats whilst Cesareo and Pastore (2015) suggest producers should team up with other appropriate entities and prosecute perpetrators. Similarly, Satomura, Wedel, and Pieters (2014) develop a method namely copy watch, copy alert and copy safe for consumers to identify and distinguish pirated products from original goods but leave out how producers and other stakeholders could actually handle the problem of copycat. Che et al. (2009) suggest innovating firms to come together, apply and obtain various patents to create “patent clusters” as a strategy to ensure continuous and consistent patronage to sustain their market whilst Gaur and Tripathi (2012) urge regulatory bodies to be streamlined to avoid unnecessary bureaucracy and interference in discharging their duties. These regulations and efforts may control copycats from overtaking the productivity and market of local industrial clusters to avoid their declines.

1.2. Industry cluster

Currently, industrial clusters are perceived not only as channels for economic development but as vehicles for social systems and inter-disciplinary environmental change in many countries (Gereffi & Lee, 2016; Kirankabeş & Arik, 2014; Kurniawan, Abdullah, Som, & Parasuraman, 2013; Mahmood, Ahmed, & Bilgrami-Jafferri, 2016; Zheliazkov, Zaimova, Genchev, Toneva, & Cvijanovic, 2015). The industrial cluster with its inter-firm networks enhances competitive economic development of regions whilst at the same time the standard of living of regions citizens is improved (Bankova, 2015; He & Rayman-Bacchus, 2010).

Through collective learning, technology and information spillovers, industrial clusters may generate innovative advantages in the form of new improved products and processes that are of high value and quality (Meng & Forman, 2016; Tsai & Yang, 2013). In addition there exist high diffusion rates of innovation among actors in this ecosystem due to the embeddedness characteristics which enhance trust and tacit understanding between members in

a cluster (Weng, 2016). These specialized skills do promote social networks and relationships that are stable as there is exchange of knowledge through interaction or through practicing over a period of time (Gereffi & Lee, 2016; Newman, Page, Rand, Shimeles, Söderbom, & Tarp, 2016). Evidently, it can be seen that firms within an industry cluster turn to be more innovative and competitive than those outside the cluster (Branco & Lopes, 2018; Lindberg & Säll, 2013; Porter, 2000) because an empirical evidence by Prim et al. (2016) proves that a significant source by which firms can generate innovation, competition and sustenance is through agglomeration economies of a cluster. The operational patterns of clusters have the flexibility in adjusting to uncertain business transformations (Purwanto, Kamaruddin, & Mohamad, 2015; He, Rayman-Bacchus, & Wu, 2011) and may explain why cluster entities that are not properly connected fail (Bankova, 2015; McCormick, 1998).

The life cycle of an industrial cluster generally go through four stages i.e. emergence, growth, maturity, and decline or renewal phases (Branco & Lopes, 2018; Fornahl, Hassink, & Menzel, 2015). Nonetheless, not all clusters are able to exhaust their life span (Branco & Lopes, 2018). A cluster may fail in its ability to withstand a fluctuating local or global environment and this could force the cluster to decline prematurely (Halse, 2017). As Weng (2016) suggests the moment information asymmetry may be experienced in a cluster and its atmosphere of innovation cease to spread without positive feedbacks. In addition, the cluster may encounter challenges in product innovation due to the new competitive ideas, opportunities and technology that could exert pressure on the cluster to decline. Fornahl et al. (2015) clearly states that a cluster's evolution largely depend on its qualitative (external environmental factors and the internal forces at work) and quantitative aspects (the number of firms and their employees) and its ability to move to the next phase is determined by the context in which they arose. When these qualitative and quantitative features are not in favour of the cluster and happen unexpectedly, they become a shock to the cluster and pushed into a release phase where the cluster diminishes in scope as most firms fold up (Martin, Sunley, & Tyler, 2015). Then the cluster's survival would depend on its capability to adapt to the changing trends and renovation (Ingstrup, Jensen, & Christensen, 2017; Valdaliso, Elola, & Franco, 2016; Østergaard & Park, 2015). According to Spencer et al. (2010), firms located in clusters do have a greater advantage with an efficient network distribution and are able to achieve higher returns than non-clustered ventures but in the absence of a collaborative network among stakeholders (Freeman & McVea, 2001; Mok et al., 2017), clusters become ineffective, experience a high cost of production and are not able to withstand business revolutions (Bankova, 2015; Kirankabeş & Arik, 2014; Weng, 2016). Currently, most literature on industry cluster focuses on the advantages and challenges but rarely discusses the copycat problem in industry clusters. That is why we set out to discuss the copycat phenomenon from cluster perspective.

1.3. Stakeholder perspective

Stakeholder concerns arise primarily from economic, social, political, environmental, legal, technical and institutional issues among others (El-Gohary, Osman, & El-Diraby, 2006; Toor & Ogunlana, 2010). Differences in personal interest and cognitive styles will lead to

diverse perceptions in their collaborations, in which they would want to influence decision making and implementation process so that their vested interest might not be endangered (Duggan, Farnsworth, & Kraak, 2013; Mok et al., 2017). The attempt to protect their interest vis-à-vis other key and powerful stakeholders normally generates conflicts which mostly take different dimensions due to variances in their backgrounds, purposes and expected outcomes (Greer, Lusch, & Vargo, 2016; Mok et al., 2017). This likely cynicism causes delays and inefficiency in implementation processes of sustainable development. Businesses have to acknowledge the viewpoints of key stakeholders and cooperate with them to have a win-win situation about a deal which they put together by possessing a common interest and platform to be able to test and implement decisions unanimously (Li, Xin, & Cheng, 2009; Vracheva & Mason, 2015; Scandellius & Cohen, 2016).

Rodriguez, Ricart, and Sanchez (2002) advocates that an entity's response to its stakeholder interaction is critical in valuing their views and seeing them as partners encourage knowledge sharing, solves critical issues, build reputation and improve innovation to ensure sustainable advantage as business transforms. The stakeholder theory admits businesses survive when the linkages of actors in an ecosystem are in good standing (Freeman & McVea, 2001; Harrison & Weaver, 2013). Apparently, interactions among stakeholders determine how organizations are inter-dependent on each other in the pursuit of innovation and production activities (Mawardi, Choi, & Perera, 2011). In this vein, stakeholder theory suggests organizations see beyond maximizing profit to considering and addressing stakeholder interrelationship and views to enhance total value added and achieve economic efficiency (Freeman & McVea, 2001; Jamali, 2008).

Harmonizing the interest of actors ensures organizational vitality and the preservation of market positions and margins in the midst of competition but these demands stakeholder orientation on pending issues that need consensus decision making (Krishnamurthy & Pria, 2011; Wang & Sengupta, 2016). It is necessary that for balanced stakeholder approach by putting actors in categories according to their potential on either threat or cooperation which makes them dysfunctional (Jo, Song, & Tsang, 2016; Mok et al., 2017; Wu, 2012). This is because the success and sustainability of programs or projects depend on such players (Herazo & Lizarralde, 2016; Patel, Manley, Hair, Ferrell, & Pieper, 2016; Shing, Chung, & Crawford, 2016). Admittedly, certain stakeholders (e.g. government, suppliers, creditors and final consumers) may exert influence on policy formulation, implementation and the economic performance of organizations either by affecting the flow of certain resources to the firm or effecting the way resources should be used in an organization (Dincer, 2011; Yang & Rivers, 2009). In this vein, Yin, Rothlin, Li, and Caccamo (2013) encourage firms to appreciate their stakeholders as responsible partners and grow with them. Effectively collaborating stakeholder perspectives and interactions enhance a cluster's competitive advantage, create knowledge and improve social capital (Wu, 2012), which may make it difficult for competitors to penetrate, imitate or substitute products of an industrial cluster (Rodriguez et al., 2002). However, Africa copycat phenomenon in some clusters are prevailing, or even threatening the local clusters' continued existence. From all the literature reviewed we may find that there is no literature addressing copycat problem in the cluster from the stakeholder relationship, which need to be investigated thoroughly and may provide some novel results.

2. Methodology

This study employed the grounded theory to investigate the prevalence of pirated textiles in the Ghanaian market. The qualitative grounded theory provides researchers with an explanatory framework to understand a phenomenon (Bulawa, 2014; Evans, 2013). Qualitative research enables researchers to gain diverse views from various social groups that may affect either directly or indirectly (Yin, 2009). Furthermore it enables researchers to understudy the micro-level factors that stimulate interactions and relations between diverse social entities (Partington, 2000). Judging by the merits of grounded theory, we deemed this method appropriate to unearth the underpinnings of imitated textiles in Ghana. This study follows the logic of grounded theory to build up a theoretical model: selection of our theme/topic, designing research questions, data collection, open coding, classifying the open codes to axial codes and then categorising the axial code to selective codes which led us to establishing the theoretical model to explain the phenomenon under study that is prevalence of copycats in African textile clusters. The blame game concept came out of the theory generated during the discussions. The study carefully identifies the respective relationships and interactivities during this process to consolidate the final theory that emanates from it.

2.1. Case selection and background

In this paper, Ghana textile cluster was selected as a sample to explore the copycat problem. Like most of countries in Africa, Ghana has been dependent on foreign countries for its textile and apparel supplies over the past decades until 1960 when the nation decided to embark on import substitution industries. The country's dependent on foreign parties for textile products were attributed to the huge investment needed to establish such entities and the non-availability of skilled labour for such enterprises (Quartey, 2006). In spite of these challenges the government acknowledged the need to establish local firms to substitute imports in order to create jobs and curb the growing poverty. With the fully support from Ghana government, the textile cluster has been emergent with about 10 large, 40 medium and two hundred small textile firms. These firms had been gradually functional since 1965, improving the socio-economic development of the nation significantly. For example, in 1977, the textile cluster accounted for nearly 27 percent of manufacturing employment in Ghana (MOTI, 2002; Abdallah, 2010) and generated USD\$ 179.7 million in 1994 (Abor & Quartey, 2010). However, the total revenue of the textile sector was only US\$ 3.173 million in 1998 and the large textile firms in 1970s had dwindled to only five employing less than 4000 individuals in 2002. Data from the Ghana Revenue Agencies Governing Board (RAGB) indicates the country loses almost 3 million Ghana cedis each year due to the inflows of pirated textiles. A decrease in target revenue and downsizing of the employment base are making a sharp decline of the textile sector (Abdallah, 2010; Abor & Quartey, 2010; MOTI, 2002).

2.2. Data collection

According to the grounded theory, data collection and analysis happens to be an interrelated interaction (Reichert, 2009). In this study, the first handed in-depth interviews and the

second handed archive data are the main approaches to collect necessary data. Criteria for key informant selection were based on the actors' relevance to the industry either directly or indirectly. An initial semi-structured interview guide was designed with a focus on questions to examine perceived factors that encourage copycat within the industry cluster. The interview guide was reviewed and emailed to key informants (made up of individuals, textile firms, and regulatory agencies) in addition with the objective of the study to seek for their permission for which it was granted. The process of data collection was in two phases. We conducted 2 separate face-to-face interviews with the identifiable key stakeholders as well as an archival analysis in the textile sector. The key informants selected for this study included 4 out of the 5 surviving textile firms, regulatory agencies, industrial associations, distributors and retailers. These agencies operated at both the core and peripheral level of the textile ecosystem. Table 1 provides a summary of the data sources for the interviews.

Table 1. Interviewees in this study (source: prepared by authors)

	Informants	Role of informant in analysis construction
Stage 1	Top managers in Textile firms: 2 production managers 2 marketing managers	Identify the existing relationships between actors, their constraints and how they affect the copycat problem on total production and firm performance.
	Semi-finished Good Producers (Gray baft producers): 1 general manager 1 production manager	Solicit information on relationship of actors. Impact of copycat on production/demand for their produce as input for final production.
	Marketing Subsidiary of a producing firm: 1 general manager	The firm's role in promoting finished goods from producers and challenges. Identifying its role in mitigating the sales of pirated goods. Government's role in promoting locally manufactured textiles.
Stage 2	Management and Supporting firms: 1 general manager 2 operation and production managers 2 sales and marketing managers 1 technology officer	Perception of copycat products. Examining the contribution of actors toward the building of a resilient ecosystem that has the capacity to mitigate the threat of copycat.
	Regulatory Agencies: 2 senior officers of regulatory agencies located at Accra and Kumasi Head of anti-piracy taskforce: 2 individuals in northern and southern borders)	Identify measures and policies implemented to curb copycat influx and their performance.
	Industrial Association: 2 Heads of Association in Northern and Southern sectors	Examine its role in ensuring industrial compliances by individual players. Assessment of government's role in protecting and projecting the industry.
	Distributor/Retails: 8 individuals (2 distributors and 2 retailers each from the central business districts of Accra and Kumasi)	To gain insight into how they access pirated goods and how they aid industrial authorities in mitigating this menace.

As shown in Table 1, Stage 1 focused primarily on the final textile production firms, semi-final product producers and a marketing subsidiary of one of the production firms with the enquiry on copycat textiles. A total of 7 interviews were conducted. Information from these interviews were transcribed and coded. Coding was performed during this stage to enable researchers to gain insight into emerging issues that needed to be addressed either by the same individuals or different entities. It was from this coding process that made researchers increase their sample size in stage 2 by interviewing a total of 19 respondents because from the emerging issues there was the need to contact other actors to solicit their views or clarify a raised concern. In view of this, actors such as regulatory bodies, textile industrial associations, distributors and retailers were included in the second stage. The inclusion of these actors helps gain various insights into copycat issue as well as the efforts made by stakeholders to address the phenomenon. The purpose of the interview is to investigate the popularity of copycat textiles and the different roles of stakeholders in mitigating copycat in the industry. Taking cognizance of the key features within the stakeholder theory which seeks to enjoin actors within a defined working environment or cluster, we point out that to be more efficient to achieve this goal of curbing copycat in the industry requires critical stakeholders to be on board to push this agenda together (Freeman & McVea, 2001; Harrison & Weaver, 2013). The main interview questions include: what has caused the influx of pirated textiles on the market? why did the textile Taskforce fail? what was the outcome of the Taskforce in fighting copycat textiles? how do the stakeholders perceive copycat textiles? what relationships exist among the stakeholders in the textile industry? Interview spanned between 30 and 40 minutes averagely with each respondent. Some interviews which were done in the local dialect were translated to English in the coding process for further analysis. Proceeding each interview session was an assurance to the interviewee that the highest level of ethical and confidentiality could be followed. Respondents from the firms were purposefully sampled from relevant departments such as production and marketing. This was to ensure these actors had significant ideas on the transformations and emerging issues in the industry.

In addition, this study also involved an archival analysis of the textile industry captured in various reports and news headlines in the media, including news report, discussions, seminar reports, governmental/agency actions and other documented materials on the textile sector. We investigated these reports making such headlines between the years 2000–2017 (July) to have an idea of how the cream of society had been impacted by this phenomenon of copycat textiles. The archival collections represented the set of historical antecedents of the phenomenon understudy and captured key themes and concerns evolved in the textile sector. These were also coded in addition to the transcribed reports to form the basis of the data collected. Figure 1 shows various headlines of reports / articles in the media for the period stated above.

3. Data analysis and results

The purpose of stage 1 was basically to identify the existing relationships between actors, their constraints and the effect of copycat problem on total production and firm performance. The outcome depicted that a lot of the constraints in the industry cluster were identified due to many disconnections in the networking within the cluster, which paved way for copycats

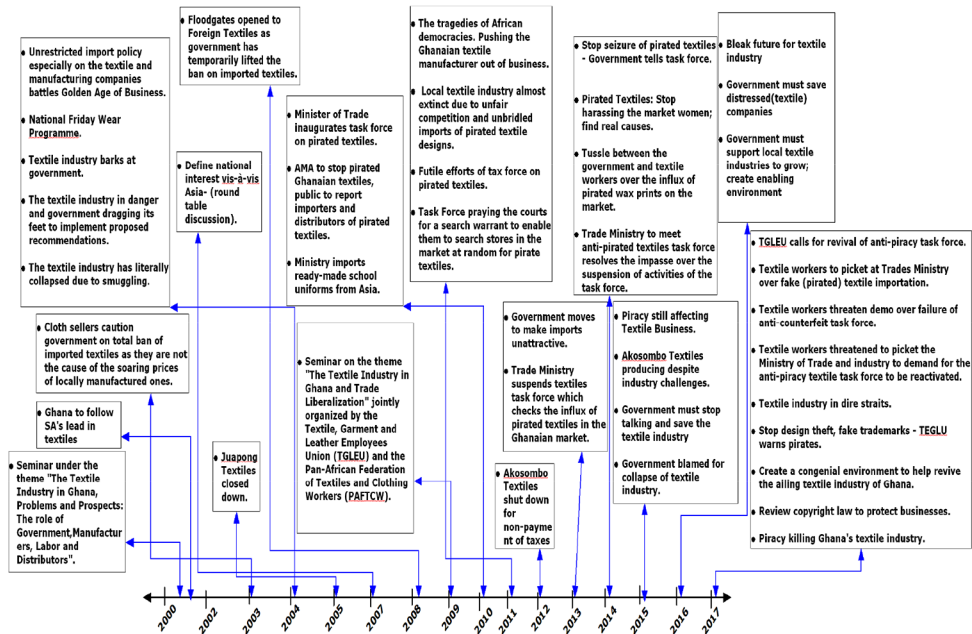


Figure 1. Archival timeline of the textile industry in Ghana representing a set of historical antecedents of the phenomenon under study capturing key themes and concerns that have evolved in the textile sector (source: prepared by authors)

to infiltrate into the textile market and had a negative effect on local textile production as demands for local textiles fell and increased redundancy. Meanwhile, the political actors were blamed for not committing to the fight of copycats by informants. With such fore knowledge through the information gathered, we proceeded to Stage 2 to contact other actors to solicit their views or clarify a raised concern.

The second stage interviews centered on the popularity of copycat textiles and the distinct roles of the stakeholders in mitigating copycat in the industry. The four key stakeholders in Stage 2 highlighted different opinions on the trends of copycats within the cluster. The management and supporting firms emphasized the existence of the practice of copycats. They attested to the downward trend of the textile cluster which they situate. They blamed on the other actors' inability to effectively function in their respective roles and lacked coordination. The Industrial Associations on their part insisted on having consistently spearheaded the fight to control copycat textiles. They used picketing and lobbying approaches, and in cases where most dialogues had failed resulting in industrial strike to demand, the political actors affirmed their fight toward this copycat threat. They courted the support of civil society in their respective operational zones and set the agenda to attract nationwide attention. This made us investigate the trends and incidents of the reactions of the textile industry and civil society in the media between the years 2000–2017, which have been captured in Figure 1, to help explain the seriousness and impact of copycat in the study area.

The regulatory agencies attested to implement policies to curb the incidence of copycats. However, they admitted the lapses in the implementation owing to the other actors within

the industrial textile clusters who did not effectively support their cause. They highlighted that such frustration had persisted as a result of mistrust for each other. Distributors/retailers failed to disclose the sources of these copycats even though they admitted its prevalence and blamed other actors within the industry for the prevalence of copycat textiles. They also ascribed the high prices of local textiles to these same actors which affected their sale output. Relationships in the ecosystem may not be cooperative, as one of stakeholders stated “Each stakeholder concentrates on its own business/matters without any common objective and no information sharing in the cluster network.” Table 2 represents some quotations from the interview illustrating actor relations in the textile ecosystem.

Table 2. Quotations illustrating relations among actors in the textile cluster (source: prepared by authors)

Inter-firm relations
<p>“Actors in textile cluster only collaborate when we need to approach the government on certain policies that are of interest to both parties. We do not collaborate with each other on production issues.”</p> <p>“In fact, we live in separate entities. Every firm concentrates on its own business and is less concerned as to what happens to the other actors except when one is pushed to the wall and demands the support of the other.”</p>
Cluster/Firm and Supplier
<p>“The supply chain network is ineffective as there is no common objective, no effective or official collaboration/cooperation, actors of the supply chain are not involved in decision making, and about 80% of decisions are made by management and implemented in the network without soliciting ideas from other actors or considering their plight.”</p>
Cluster/Firm and Industrial association
<p>“Industrial associations have been very instrumental and active but we do not involve them in decision making aside occasionally taking advantage of their training programs.”</p>
Cluster/Firm and Distributors/Retailers
<p>“Our relationship has only been on the basis of feedbacks from the market to improve production.”</p>
Cluster and Task force
<p>“The only cooperation has been at the level of fighting pirated textiles which the taskforce even though confiscates imitated textiles; refuse to burn these pirated goods as some stakeholders were involved.”</p>
Cluster and Regulatory agencies
<p>“Regulatory agencies are supposed to control importation of textile which comes in through the back door but there is limited collaboration between us.”</p> <p>“It’s supposed to have been two-way affairs with the textile industry channelling their grievances/challenges through to be solved but the agencies aren’t responding to our complaints.”</p>

All these interviews recorded were transcribed and saved using Microsoft Office Word 2013. The transcribed records and archival reports were examined line by line to unearth the main ideas to enable the creation of quotations and codes. The data from the study in the form of transcribed interviews and archival reports were initially manually coded and inputted for further analysis using ATLAS.ti (Version 7, GmbH, Berlin). Table 3 shows the initial open codes from the transcribed interviews and archival reports.

Table 3. Initial open codes (source: prepared by authors)

1.	abrupt suspension of taskforce resolution	2.	availability of cheap copycat textile designs from abroad
3.	client dissatisfaction of services	4.	closer of firms
5.	collaborative target setting	6.	collective objective
7.	common platform	8.	competition of cheap foreign textiles
9.	controlling the importation of textile prints within Africa	10.	copycat policy failure due to government interference
11.	copycat declines industry	12.	copycat of local designs
13.	copycat textiles proliferation	14.	copycat smuggling
15.	copycat textiles causing industry layoffs	16.	copycat textiles declining firm's revenue
17.	distributor and customer relationships	18.	customer dissatisfaction
19.	customer feedback	20.	demonstration against copycat textiles
21.	demonstration on reactivation of taskforce	22.	distributors/retailers' threats to government on importation of copycat textiles
23.	distributor relationships	24.	employee agitation
25.	firms blame government on copycats	26.	firm-government interactions
27.	futile effort of taskforce due to smuggling	28.	firms blame government on industrial decline
29.	importation of copycat textiles	30.	government to check trade malpractices
31.	importation of copycat textiles as against political will of government	32.	imported textiles patronage
33.	unfair competition	34.	preference of selling copycat textiles
35.	prevalence of copycat textiles	36.	price differential and competition
37.	problem with marketing local textiles	38.	protest against pirated textiles
39.	inactive taskforce against pirated textiles	40.	inactive taskforce in policy implementation
41.	lack of government support for local textiles	42.	ineffective taskforce due to limited mandate
43.	inefficient taskforce	44.	influx of copycat products
45.	insufficient raw materials	46.	inter-firm relationship
47.	lack of client-firm interaction	48.	low stakeholder interactions
49.	lack of inter- agency collaboration	50.	lack of mutual objective
51.	lack of mutual understanding	52.	low communication among actors
53.	low community engagement	54.	low community interaction
55.	low firm-worker relationships	56.	low inter- firm relationship
57.	low inter-agency relationship or collaboration	58.	non-existence of supplier-buyer relationship
59.	low supplier buyer interaction	60.	low supply chain network interaction
61.	market forces influencing copycat	62.	preference for selling copycat textiles
63.	perception of the textile industry	64.	pirate textiles

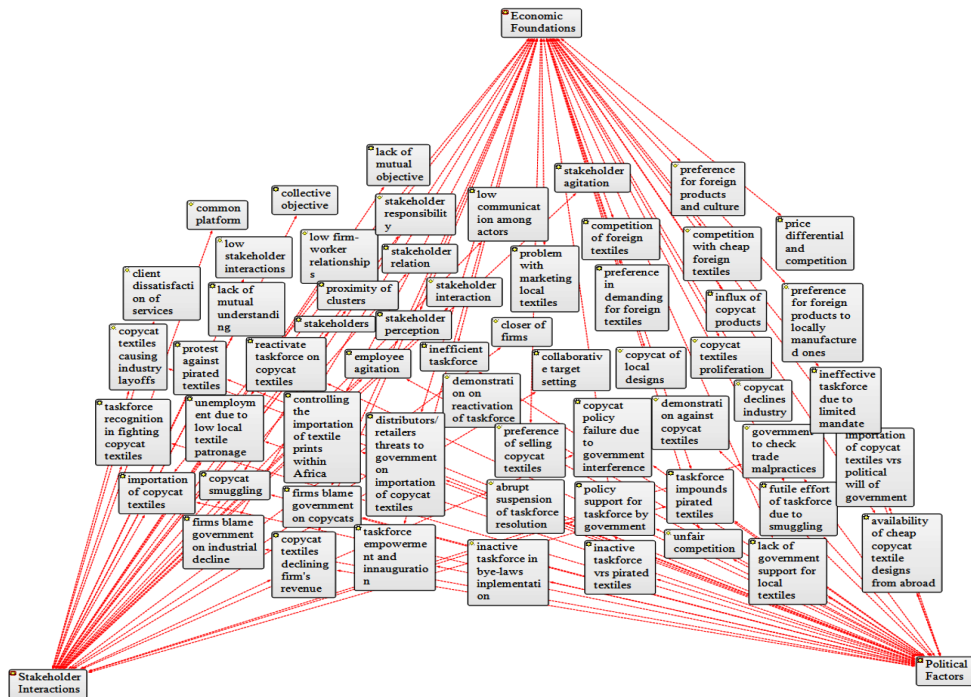
End of Table 3

65.	policy support for taskforce by government	66.	preference for foreign products and culture
67.	preference in demanding	68.	proximity of clusters
69.	reactivate taskforce on copycat textiles	70.	stakeholder agitation
71.	stakeholder interaction	72.	stakeholder perception
73.	stakeholder relation	74.	stakeholder responsibility
75.	task force regimes	76.	taskforce empowerment and inauguration
77.	taskforce impounds pirated textiles	78.	taskforce recognition in fighting copycat textiles
79.	textile pirating	80.	unemployment due to low local textile patronage

The axial coding (Families) is the next step of the open coding. The linkages between codes identified enable us to group similar codes. Typically, these axial codes establish the relationships between individual codes and facilitate the categorization and conceptualization sourced from the open codes. According to Strauss and Corbin (1994) suggestion, this study reiterated the probing questions in related structural processes and finally 14 axial codes were generated from the open codes. Selective coding (Super Families) constituted the last phase of our data analysis. The selective coding drew its themes out of the 14 axial codes that were generated from the initial 80 codes. In the same way, we deployed the process used in identifying the themes in the axial coding. These themes for the selective coding considered mainly the overall objective of the study which investigated the prevalence of copycat textiles in the Ghanaian market and why the policy to curb it did not work. This analysis resulted in 3 broad themes (Super Families) which formed the basis of our theory derivation. For example, axial codes such as copycat of local designs, importation of copycat textiles, competition of copycat textiles and market forces were brought under a super family termed “Economic foundations”. Table 4 gives an elaborate detail of the axial and its corresponding selective codes.

Table 4. Axial and selective codes (source: prepared by authors)

Axial codes	Selective codes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – copycat of local designs (textile pirating) – illegal importation of copycat textiles by unidentified actors in the textile eco-system – competition of copycat textiles (due to pricing) – market forces 	Economic foundations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – government regulation and control – taskforce inefficiency – legitimacy of policy/bye laws on pirated textiles – taskforce-government relations 	Political factors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – stakeholder engagement – ack of mutual objective of actors – lack of mutual understanding of actors – failure in collaboration – stakeholder perception on pirated textiles – stakeholder responsibility 	Stakeholder interactions



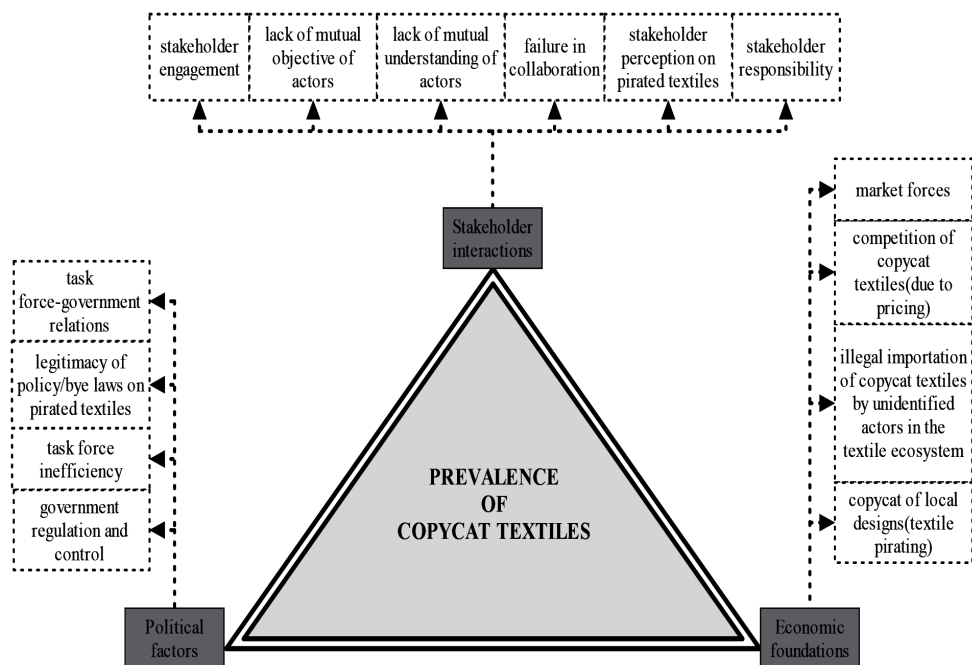


Figure 3. Triangle model for prevalence of copycat textiles in Africa (source: prepared by authors)

consumers' preference in demanding for pirated textiles due to pricing differentials and distributors/retailers preference in trading off local textiles for copycat to make their profit margins. As two respondents said in the interviews:

"The major reason leading to influx of copycat textiles is the import from Asia, which creates unfair competition and pirating of our designs by these foreign companies without paying anything to the owners of the designs and our porous border also allows smuggling of these imitated textiles" -Marketing Subsidiary Firm

"About half the price of a 6 yards local cloth can buy a 6 yards copycat textile. This make the copycat textiles sell faster than the locally produced ones. As long as the copycats are affordable and continue to sell faster for us to maximize profits, we will continue to sell them" -Distributor

The economic factor triggering pirated textiles has two dimensions: on the one hand copycat textile is positively serving a segment of the population whose income level cannot support the demand of locally manufactured textiles by considering copycats as good substitutes to satisfy their needs (Andersson, 2009; Che et al., 2009); on the other hand, the high prevalence and patronage of these copycat textiles in Ghana according to the textile firms has led to a decline in their revenue. This has steered the closure of some textile firms whilst the remaining ones are compelled to decrease their productivity and employment base as deduced from the interview "The decrease in production is making us reduce our employment base as we can't cope with the high overhead costs". Indeed, this assertion is consistent with the results of Miceli and Pieters (2010) and Esmaeili and Noori (2016) that copycat have the tendency of disrupting investments of originators, a negative effect on productivity,

employment and poverty reduction. Blackstone et al. (2014) admits copycats make nations loose foreign investors as there is no guarantee of recouping investments. These events have worsened unemployment and poverty rates in the country and exerted devastating effect on households and the nation at large.

4.2. Political factors: fuelling copycat textiles

The political aspect of copycat textiles are with regulation and control of copycat textiles, during which the government inaugurated and mandated a taskforce to clampdown pirated textiles. Our findings expose that the weakness of the political system hampered the work of the taskforce. For example, mention can be made of how some political figures had to bring an abrupt end to the taskforce activity as captured on Ghana web business news (DG, 2013). This unexpected political decision quickly generated some agitations in the textile companies as well as their employees, envisaging there were low commitment and responsiveness of governmental regulatory agencies in curbing imitated textiles. It is evident that there was the inconsistency of policies and pronouncements on pirated textiles by the political actors, which strained the taskforce efficiency (GNA, 2010a; GNA, 2010b; Abdulai, 2013; DG, 2013). As a final producing firm pointed out “there is lack of political will on the part of our government to control importation specifically on copycat textiles. Besides, the government feels it will be unpopular when they arrest some interest groups”. Such drifts confirmed the studies of Thakur and Ramacha (2012) and Gaur and Tripathi (2012) that political interference might fuel copycat products.

Considering the development within the textile industry cluster, we identify that the producers have the approval and recognition (legitimacy) of textile production. However they lack the control (power) in curbing the influx of copycats. Within the confines of the regulators, they demonstrated such legitimacy and power in enforcing regulations. In reference to the use of such power, there is a clear insufficient commitment to fully tackle the phenomenon under study. The distributors/retailers on the other hand have the legitimacy to operate within the textile cluster domain for as long as their supplies of textiles on the market are not copycats. Even though the activities of distributors/retailers were monitored by the regulators, they still had a way of penetrating the market with copycat textiles. In complimenting the effort of producers, the industrial associations acted as a conglomeration of these producing firms, which legitimated but lacked the power to control copycat proliferation. The task force demonstrated high levels of legitimacy by virtue of their inauguration as political actors to control copycat textiles. Their operations were heavily influenced by these political actors. This casts its shadow on their operability as the political actors limit their power to operate. They can be said to have insufficient power in their operation even though legitimate. In Africa, happenings like these are common, implicate, retarding the progress in curbing copycat problem and its impacts.

4.3. Stakeholder interactions in the textile cluster: the blame game

Stakeholder interactions have to do with responsibility, perception, collaborations and sensitivities of actors within the textile ecosystem on pirated textiles. This study reveals there

is a blame game flowing among these stakeholders, concerning the popularity of copycat textiles and the failure of corresponding regulatory policies. The following excerpts from the interview may disclose some perspectives of stakeholders:

“The major reason for the influx of imitated textiles is the import from Asia which creates unfair competition and pirating of our designs by these foreign companies without paying anything to the owners of the designs. For influx and pirating of designs you cannot anticipate when and the extent and that is a painful and more severe challenge” -Final Producing Firm

“We do not know the exact individual/s into these pirated textiles but we are convinced an actor of the textile ecosystem is involved in this” -Marketing Subsidiary Firm

“The regulatory bodies formulate policies and implement them. But they are not swift and effective in carrying out the implementation of policies due to bureaucracy and lack of political will” -Industrial Association

“A task force has been set up to curb the situation. The problem is with the distributors and retailers of textiles. They are trading between companies that produce textiles in the country and smugglers of textiles to the country but are not ready to disclose the smugglers. The retailers and distributors should have helped the regulatory agencies and the local manufactures but for the profit they are making out of the pirated textiles. It is because of the task force that the distributors and retailers are compelled to sell the local textiles otherwise they would have gone in totally for the pirated textiles” -Regulatory Body

From these typical excerpts, we may discover that there were accusations, suspicions and doubts among actors in the ecosystem. The network map of the pattern of blame game among the key actors in the textile ecosystem is shown in the Appendix. For instance, the raw material firms blamed their downstream firms for not paying on time, affecting their decisions. The final producers blamed their suppliers for not supplying good quality and standard inputs so that they had to pay more to import, increasing the cost of production. As a result, distributors and retailers blamed the local textile firms for high prices of their products and preferred distributing and selling copycat textiles instead. In addition, industrial associations also blamed government for the influx of copycat textiles and the decline of the textile industry by not efficiently controlling the country's borders against illegal entry of imitated textiles as well as the extent of copycat textile importation while regulatory bodies blame distributors and retailers for covering up smugglers of copycat textiles into the country. The firms again blamed the task force for not exercising their responsibilities to the brim as expected when they were in operation whilst the task force also blamed the textile firms for information asymmetry as it was sometimes difficult distinguishing between original and a pirated textile. The regulatory agencies, after inaugurating a taskforce with the mandate to clamp down copycat textiles, turned to blame the taskforce for harassing textile traders and abruptly suspended their work.

The entire ecosystem is full of blames with no actor accepting responsibility for copycat prevalence. However, each tends to lay such responsibility to act on the other stakeholders. According to Scandeliuss and Cohen (2016), such incidents negate the fruitfulness of policy implementation. Considering our discussion, stakeholders trust and credibility is questioned. Gilbert and Rasche (2008) see this as a challenge that should be overcome if the cluster would

achieve success. In this vein, stakeholders are encouraged to see themselves as partners working, growing, generating value and solving critical issues together (Freeman & McVea, 2001; Yin et al., 2013).

From the blame game we could see that there was no cooperation among stakeholders as captured in the following excerpts depicting actor relations in the textile ecosystem.

“Actors in the textile cluster only collaborate when we need to approach the government on certain policies that are of interest to both parties. We do not collaborate with each other on production issues.”

“The supply chain network is ineffective as there is no common objective, no effective or official collaboration; actors of the supply chain are not involved in decision making.”

“The only cooperation has been at the level of fighting pirated textiles which the task-force even though confiscates imitated textiles; refuse to burn these pirated goods as some stakeholders were involved.”

“Regulatory agencies are supposed to control importation of textile which comes in through the back door but...there is limited collaboration between us.”

These findings indicate gaps in the structures of the cluster ecosystem creating space for perpetrators of copycat textiles to thrive since there is no display of any strong coordination and control mechanisms among the collective actors. A well-built ecosystem has the propensity to increase trust and knowledge sharing. Trust is an essential component for industrial players to achieve the purpose of combating copycat. The gap among stakeholders in the ecosystem will prevent actors from gaining access to the needed social capital as advocated by studies on collective behaviour and systems (Gavetti & Warglien, 2015; Mortensen, 2014). Meanwhile, it is necessary to embark on joint actions with the consensus of members even though independently, actors might have their own specialized activities to capitalize on.

From the various factors discussed above, it is reasonable to connect the shaky relationships in the cluster to the popularity of copycat textiles. As Rodriguez et al. (2002) suggests, when actor relationship is unstable, it is easier for competitors to penetrate, imitate and substitute products of an industrial cluster. The study revealed from the interviews conducted that actors within the textile ecosystem are not obliged to each other, showing the incorporation within the cluster. For instance, companies processing raw cotton into lints decide either to export or supply the local producers of gray baft depending on the highest bidder. Producers of gray baft decide in supplying the local textile firms or exporting their products which is a major input for the textile firms. Amazingly, the textile firms also decide to choose importing their inputs (cotton) or demand from local sources of which the former has been their emphasis and preference. All these indicate that the cost advantage through the corporation in the geographic agglomeration has been largely decayed, implying the decline of the textile cluster in Ghana. Prevailing now are suspicions and mistrust. These findings contradicts the stakeholder theory that stipulates the survival, pursuance and achievement of common goals depends on the linkages of actors in an ecosystem (Freeman & McVea, 2001; Harrison & Weaver, 2013) and the clustering theory that urge actors of an ecosystem to consider themselves as webs of interactions (Jamali, 2008; Porter, 1998). Our results indicate that there is the need to harmonize relations in the ecosystem to address the blame game, preventing the prevalence of copycats which has been an important reason for the declining

of textile cluster in Africa (Herazo & Lizarralde, 2016; Patel et al., 2016; Shing et al., 2016).

Considering the severity of copycat phenomenon on international trade (Andersson, 2009; Blackstone et al., 2014) and its ability of damaging some societies (Blackstone et al., 2014; Chen et al., 2010; Vego, 2009), this study may serve as a key ingredient to influencing the policy and the fight of copycat within the general scope of the Africa as well as the other developing areas in the world. To curb copycats can also be important for multinational enterprises that desire investing in Africa to guarantee their recouping investments, increasing local productivity and revenue, which may help solve unemployment, poverty and corruption (Miceli & Pieters, 2010; Esmaeili & Noori, 2016) in these destination countries where the markets are imperfect (Che et al., 2009; Warlop & Alba, 2004). We urge producers, regional governments, the international community and other appropriate entities to collaborate in uprooting copycat as suggested by Vego (2009) and Cesareo and Pastore (2015). Effective cooperation of stakeholders in an industrial cluster will make such an ecosystem behave like a tent deeply rooted in, which cannot be moved and neither its stakes nor any of its ropes could be pulled up or broken (Freeman & McVea, 2001; Porter, 1998).

Conclusions

This paper attempts to investigate the prevalence of copycat in African textile clusters. Employing the grounded theory the study revealed economic, political and stakeholder relations as key factors propelling the popularity of these copycats. Our findings show that all actors engaged in the blame game play a dominant role on weakening the effectiveness of government policies. The non-acceptance of responsibility for copycats has become a catalyst for perpetrators of copycat to grow.

Thus our research extends both the cluster and stakeholder theories as pertains to the African textile clusters where actor deficiencies have accounted for a repertoire of blames thereby crippling the textile industrial sector and grants useful insights on how these two theories could unearth such dearth of growth which has bedevilled the sector over decades. Furthermore, our results also lead to finding the grounds to correct the anomalies and to foster collaborations after identifying such gaps amongst the actors. All these findings can provide some insightful directions to address the copycat problem. For example, network governance might be useful for ensuring collaboration among actors to mitigate the copycat problem, rather than only depending on government. It is a system of governance based on trust, cooperation and interdependency and many studies have shown its superior performance in creating and maintaining trust among multi actor relationships, controlling as well as in coordinating various stakeholders collectively in a peculiar way (Ebers & Leon, 2016; Montenegro & Sergio, 2014). The findings of the study related to the blame game require the respective actors to be transformed from blaming to finding ways of collaborating to improve the industry. This would enable the streamlining of roles and ensure the symmetry of responsibilities and functionalities. Even though the decline trend of African textile cluster has already existed, by employing the network governance, the various actors in the cluster who are having apportioning blame on each other might sit together to seek a reasonable redress mechanism in order to ensure their actions to streamline towards rebuilding a productive textile industry again. To be a special actor in the network, government should

proactively promote collaborative inter-agency actions to fight the copycat menace by repackaging and designing strategies/approaches through the employment and increasing of stakeholder consultations. Network governance would restore the dwindled confidence that players within the cluster experience and ensure success in restraining copycat and sustain African textile clusters. All these are the significant theoretical and practical insights developed from our study.

The implication of studying this phenomenon to other African countries is that given the similarity in the economies and the characteristics of our market systems, similar incidents could possibly be occurring in them. The results and proposed framework model would therefore become a benchmark for the textile clusters within these countries to help them harness the potential of the textile industry and to curb such incidences in their locality. The limitations and further directions of this study are as follows: (1) this study only took Ghana as a sample, future studies could be expanded to other countries to allow for a more diverse and comparative study to give more generalization and direction on policy formulation and implementation to recover African textile clusters; (2) in this study, we only consider the textile clusters, indeed there are many other clusters in Africa, which also face the similar problem. Thus in the further study, we may explore their stakeholders relationship to generalize the results of this study; (3) the study mainly took a qualitative approach, however, this could further be developed to measure the extent of quantitative relationships and establish the corresponding hypotheses to be empirically tested; (4) these analyses would serve as a guide to policy makers and the textile ecosystem to prioritize future programs and resources in controlling piracy. An approach that can boost stakeholder interrelations, avoid accusations and enhance actor equilibrium is also worth researching into. This will make actors appreciate the strength in collective to withstand likely storms.

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Author contributions

LAK and ZH conceived the article's idea. LAK and CHE were responsible for data collection. LAK, ZH, CHE and DJ performed the data analysis and interpretation. LAK, ZH, and CHE were involved in drafting the article to its final stage.

Disclosure statement

Authors of this paper declare that we have no any competing financial, professional, or personal interests from other parties.

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APPENDIX

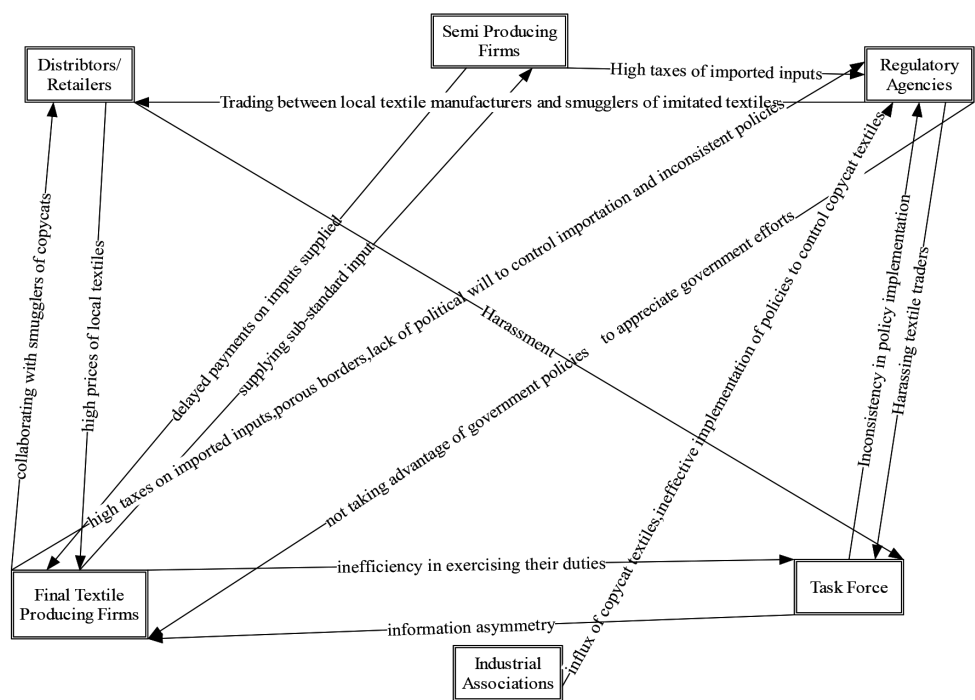


Figure 4. The blame game among stakeholders on copycat textiles