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Exploring the Benefits of Beaded Accessory in the Shama District of the Western Region, Ghana

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Abstract: ***Providing entrepreneurial skills to Ghanaian youth has become a national concern in recent time. This has been highlighted in the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 Target 4.4, which states that by 2030, substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship. This study explores the benefits and prospects of beaded accessory industry in Shama District of the Western Region to ascertain its feasibility as an avenue for providing the youth with entrepreneurial skills. Qualitative research design was used. Self-reported data were collected from the 17 people comprising three (3) producers, four (4) sellers and ten (10) users of beaded accessories using interview. The data collected from the interviewees was analysed using descriptive and thematic content procedures. The results of the study show that beaded accessories are worn by royals; used for cultural purposes; women wore them around their waists, as earrings/necklaces/anklets/bracelets for various functions in the past; used to decorate sewn clothes, bags/purses and footwear. It was recommended that in the face of this current unemployment rate among the youth in Ghana, the government should liaise with the chiefs to establish small bamboo fashion accessories industries at the places where there are bamboo plantations.***

Keywords: Use of beads fashion accessory, Shama District, Western Region, Ghana.

I. INTRODUCTION

Beads have been around for so long a time that they have almost become unnoticed and forgotten. The use of beads in Africa is universal. Every nation in the African continents have used beads and continue to use them in one way or the other. In Africa, beads have been with humans for a long time that they were almost invisible. Men and women made beads to decorate their bodies and to fulfill their spiritual needs. Beads were also used for trade and as medium of exchange. Ceramic and recycled glass beads were used for exchanged for food or livestock and was used as an early means of currency. African Waist Beads are one of the most commonly replicated items of personal adornment worn by Ghanaian people. Traditionally, multiple strands of colored beads made from seeds or glass are worn around a woman's waist to draw attention to, and enhance her femininity.

In some West African countries, trade beads have their own special markets because they have become precious and rare, they can be used as a method of investment. Beads also played a big role in the beliefs of Yoruba societies. Many amulets and charms consisted of beads. These would be thrown on a mat by the flick of a wrist to determine one's fortune; they could be contained in guards which would be shaken to ward off evil spirits. Beads were used as part of African religious rituals, increasing their value and respect for beads. Many other societies in Nigeria had unique uses for their beads, such as for attracting members of the opposite sex, and as play items for young children and adolescents. Beads therefore had a big part to play in many cultures and held great meaning to those that believed in them.

Many ethnic groups that make up Nigeria have a strong attachment to the use of beads as an important part of their culture. The Igbos call it Mgbaji while for the Hausas, it is referred to as Jigida. For the Yoruba, beads play a very significant role in many cultural events. They are a major feature during many traditional festivals during which devotees and participants decorate their bodies with beads of different shapes, colours and sizes.

In Ghanaian culture beads are both treasured and revered. Their importance as objects of beauty and spirituality, the symbolism of beads in Ghanaian culture is an endless source of inspiration for jewelry making ideas. Beads are used to mark family status, special occasions, and the important rite of passage of girls to puberty. When a girl comes of age, she is customarily adorned with beads around the waist, ankles and neck in preparation for her public unveiling. Some beads are purely decorative. However, those worn about the neck convey specific information about her family background, clan and wealth to potential suitors.

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From birth to death, beads play a significant role in the rites and customs of its people that goes beyond mere self-expression. Beads in Ghanaian culture is primarily considered not only as items of decoration, but they are also important tools for communication, expressing ideas, messaging and symbolizing events through the language of color. Among the Krobo and Ashante for example, wood and glass beads are commonly worn for spiritual protection. Customarily bequeathed to families, it is commonly believed the beads communicate the knowledge and wisdom of family ancestors to the living. Not only they testament to the vibrance of Ghanaian creativity, but they also play a significant role in the country's history, rituals and culture. The relevance of beads as discussed above suggests that beads are a fundamental part of Africa, West Africa and Ghanaian heritage.

Indifferently, in Shama District of the Western Region of Ghana, beads were one of the primeval cultural adornments in several occasions that were affected with time. However, in recent times, innovations are drifting times back to the use of natural materials in the making of beads.

However, the benefits as well as feasibility of the beaded industry being an avenue for entrepreneurial skills development in the youth has not been assessed or tapped in the Shama District of the Western Region. This study explores the benefits and prospects of beaded accessory industry in Shama District of the Western Region to ascertain its feasibility as an avenue for providing the youth with entrepreneurial skills.

A. Statement of the Problem

Shama District, like in other districts in Ghana, beaded accessories are used in various aspects of the culture. People wear beads on different parts of their bodies in various colours and shapes as body ornaments to different places and ceremonies. However, lack of innovativeness in the design of bamboo beads, make its accessories casually used but not for functions. This has paved way for other material beads especially, glass beads to dominate in the production of fashionable beaded accessories for all function.

Wearing a particular type of bead can tell whether a person is sad or happy; tell the social and spiritual status within the community; the association with a particular group or tell a period in the life of the person ornamented. On several occasions, many inhabitants of the Shama District and beyond use beaded accessories based exclusively on personal wishes, feelings, or perceptions, rather than on objective facts or principles of their culture. This may be attributed to foreign influences that have infiltrated their society. As a result, many people seem to have forgotten about the overwhelming uses of beaded accessories and their symbolism, hence the study.

The bead accessory industry in Ghana is lucrative in many parts of the country. However, the beads industry is still regarded as an infant industry in the Shama District of the Western Region. This study explores the benefits and prospects of the beaded accessory industry in the Shama District of the Western Region to ascertain its feasibility as an avenue for providing the youth with entrepreneurial skills. The investigation seeks to explore answers to the following research questions:

What are the benefits of bamboo beads in the fashion accessory industry in the Shama District of the Western Region?

How can the bead fashion accessory industry be used as an avenue for entrepreneurial skills development in the youth?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. History and Origin of Beads

From Encarta (2009), beads are small perforated objects, usually spherical, that may be strung into necklaces and bracelets or attached to clothing or furnishings. The word 'bead' is derived from the Anglo-Saxon word *beade* or *bede*, meaning "prayer," and was originally applied to prayer beads. Prayer beads are aids to prayer. They enable a worshiper to count the prayers he or she is praying. The use of beads to count prayers originated with the Hindus of India in the 6th century BC. As religious artifacts, they are also used in the Christian and Islamic faiths.

Historically, beads have been discovered and used in many ancient countries including ancient Greek, Egypt, Rome, Africa and Ghana. Around 1,400 BC, the Greeks started using the accessory made from gold and gems that were beautifully designed and created by skilled artisans. Like other cultures, Greeks use their accessory to display their status and membership. They wore it on special occasions and were mostly for public appearances. It was mainly worn by women to show their wealth, social status, and personal body decoration and was commonly specified as a gift. The Greeks used some of the accessories based on religious belief, to give them protection against evils and enemies. There were also superstitious thoughts that wearing the special stones endowed the owner with supernatural powers, while others had a religious symbolism. Older pieces of accessory that have been found were dedicated to the Gods.

Historically, beads have been discovered and used in many ancient countries including ancient Greece, Egypt, Rome, Africa, and Ghana. As Shafrin (2008) put it, the discovery of thousands of Egyptian mummies in a network of tombs reinforces the fact that

Egyptians were obsessed with dressing the mummies in the proper clothing and accessories to prepare them for their trip to the underworld. Egyptian burial sites have provided knowledge about the history and use of beads in ancient civilizations because so much beaded material has survived in their sarcophagi. Much of this accessory was too fragile to have been worn but has survived because it was made specifically for use in the other world.

The earliest Egyptians were tremendous pioneers in the use of bead accessories. Fine beads accessory in Egypt was not only a quantitative measure of beauty but in ancient times it was also considered that accessories provided spiritual and magical protection. Different minerals and metals had different recognition and relations with different gods. An accessory was also identified for spiritual and healthful values. Accessories played different roles as they had religious and supernatural importance in Egyptian culture and were considered as protection from the dark (Imran, 2005). Minerals and metals were identified with specific deities as well as with specific spiritual and therapeutic values. Thus, their words for lapis lazuli and turquoise were synonymous with joy and delight respectively. Copper and malachite were identified with Hathor as gold was connected to the solar deity (Filstrup, 1982).

B. Uses of Beads

In Africa, the use of beads is universal. Every civilization, nation, or people, at one point in time, has used beads and continues to use them in one way or the other. They have been with men for a long time and they were almost invisible. Men and women made beads to decorate their bodies and to fulfill their spiritual needs. Perhaps beads-making started about the same time in widely dispersed locations. This may be compared with the continuity theory of modern human development, occurring in parallel among populations around the world. Very old beads similar to each other have been discovered in Africa, Europe, and Asia (White, 1957). African Waist Beads are one of the most commonly replicated items of personal adornment worn by Ghanaian people. Traditionally, multiple strands of colored beads made from seeds or glass are worn around a woman's waist to draw attention to and enhance her femininity.

In Yoruba culture, beads play a very significant role in many cultural events. They are a major feature during many traditional festivals during which devotees and participants decorate their bodies with beads of different shapes, colors, and sizes. Beads have over the centuries served more than every Yoruba-speaking community as articles of jewellery. They have been used to express political history, religious beliefs, and social status. The Yorubas are extremely glamorous in dressing, using a lot of beads as necklaces, earrings, and bracelets sometimes, they even use it to decorate their hair. Mostly the crowns, shoes, and walking sticks of Obas and Kabiesies are decorated with expensive beads to show case royalty. However, in recent times, beads have been used in the fashion industry to show case fashion. In many African countries, for example, clothes have historically been decorative as well as scaring, painting, tattooing, or jewellery as a form of beads. The fashion industry involves significant creativity and innovation, satisfying the criteria of both aesthetic design and utility to consumers. Fashion designs may also be manifestations of art, culture and symbolism. In Ghanaian culture beads are both treasured and revered. From birth to death, they play a significant role in the rites and customs of its people that goes beyond mere self-expression. Beads in Ghanaian culture is primarily considered not only as items of decoration, but they are also important tools for communication, expressing ideas, messaging and symbolizing events through the language of color. Among the Krobo and Ashante for example, wood and glass beads are commonly worn for spiritual protection. Customarily bequeathed to families, it is commonly believed the beads communicate the knowledge and wisdom of family ancestors to the living.

Additionally, beads are a fundamental part of Ghanaian heritage. Not only they a testament to the vibrance of Ghanaian creativity, but they also play a significant role in the country's history, rituals, and culture. Some beads are purely decorative. However, those worn about the neck convey specific information about family background, clan, and wealth to potential suitors. Commonly, the larger the beads were worn by the individual, the more affluent their family. The royal beads among the Ewes largely signify social values including pride, wealth, status, and dignity. They can also have different values and attributes based on their source of origin, the status of the original possessor, and how they were acquired. Moreover, beads also portray other beliefs. Among the Ashanti's and Krobos, mothers present waist beads to their daughters to mark the beginning of their adulthood. Once they reach sexual maturity, larger beads or bells may be added. This is so that, when a woman walks, the beads produce a sound to inform potential suitors of her availability. Today, waist beads also serve as a weight control device. The rolling up of the beads on the waist indicates that the wearer has lost weight. The uses of beaded accessories have been studied in many cultures including the Ewes, The Krobos, the Gas, and the Ashanti. However, the literature reviewed showed no substantial information about the uses of beaded accessories in the Shama districts of the Western Region. This study explores the benefits and prospects of the beaded accessory industry in the Shama District of the Western Region to ascertain its feasibility as an avenue for providing the youth with entrepreneurial skills.

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III. MATERIALS AND METHODS

A. *Study Area and Design*

The study was conducted in the Shama District in the Western Region of Ghana. The (Ghana Statistical Service, 2014) indicates that according to the 2010 Population and Housing Census of Ghana, the Shama District was carved out of the former Shama Ahanta East Metropolis (SAEM) and was established in December, 2007 by Legislative Instrument (LI 1882). Officially, it was inaugurated in March 2008 with its District Capital at Shama. The District is bordered to the west by the Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolis, to the east by the Komenda-Edina-Eguafo-Abrem District in the Central Region, to the north by the Mpohor Wassa East District, and to the south by the Gulf of Guinea. The District covers an area of 193.7 square kilometers with a population density of 423.2 and has 67 settlements. The method adopted for the study was the qualitative research approach. The descriptive method of the study design was used in describing the various uses and symbolism of bamboo beaded fashion accessories as well as the innovative ways of using bamboo beads in making fashion accessories in the Shama District in the Western Region of Ghana. According to Leedy & Ormrod (2005), descriptive research involves acquiring information about one or more groups of people through questions and tabulation of answers. This may include their characteristics, opinions, attitudes, or previous experiences. Descriptive research therefore answers the questions "how?" and "who?"

B. *Population for the Study*

According to Bryman (2012), a population is defined as the representation of the universe of units that share common attributes from which a sample is selected. In other words, it is the entire collection of items from which samples can be drawn. The Population of the District according to the 2010 Population & Housing Census stands at 81,966 with 38,704 males and 43,262 and a growth rate of 3.2 percent (2010 PHC). However, the targeted population for this study included all producers of beaded fashion accessories, particularly but not limited to bamboo beads sellers and users in the Shama District, the case study of the project. It was crucial to gather data personally by taking advantage of the resources directly around rather than relying solely on textbook materials.

C. *Sample Size and Sampling Technique*

The sample size for the study is presented in Table 1.

Branch	Target N0	N0. Interviewed	Percentage (%)
Beaded accessory Producers	3	3	17.65
Beads sellers	4	4	23.53
Royals	2	2	11.76
Other inhabitants	8	8	47.06
TOTAL	17	17	100

The data presented in Table 1 above shows that out of the 17 participants interviewed, 3(17.6%) were beaded fashion accessory producers, 4(23.5%) were sellers of beads fashion accessories, 2(11.8) constituted royals. and 8(47.5%) were other users of beads fashion accessories. This was done to gather opinions from the interviewees on the benefits and prospects of bamboo beads fashion accessory production, by investigating the various uses of bamboo beaded fashion accessory industry and ascertaining the feasibility of the industry as avenue for entrepreneurial skills development in the youth.

D. *Research Instrument and Data Collection Procedure*

The data collection instrument used was the interview guide. It was considered by the researcher because conducting an interview would serve as a cross check of the authenticity of the responses that may be made by the accessible population sample. Both the structured and unstructured forms of interview were employed. While the structured form got the process underway, the unstructured form made it possible to explore statements that came out during the course of the interview to extract more information from the interviewee via follow-up questions. The researcher conducted random preliminary interviews whenever she visited the Shama District. The reason was to access the feasibility to the research. Again, the researcher engaged primary data, which were analysed and interpreted. The primary data collection method explored the originality of data through gathering of information relevant to the study. Primary data was obtained from participants at the Shama District in the Western Region of Ghana. Via interviews, the researcher gathered data from the participants who were the primary concern in the survey design.
For the interview sessions, seventeen (17) participants were engaged. The researcher combed the streets and personally administered the interview with a section of the accessible population.

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E. Ethical Requirements

A central feature of research is to make results and findings public and to provide descriptions and explanations that are publicly available**.** The consent to participate in the interview was sought from study participants before the administration of the research instruments. The researcher obtained an introductory letter from the Department of Fashion Design and Textiles Education in the College of Technology Education, Kumasi of the University of Education, Winneba, stating the purpose and objectives of the study and the cooperation of the research participants. The introductory letter was kept by the researcher for the perusal of participants to avail themselves of the study.

F. Types of Data and Data Analysis Plan

The data gathered for the success of this project were segmented into two; primary and secondary data. The primary data was obtained from interviews conducted and direct observations made by the researcher. The secondary data on the other hand was obtained from published materials and unpublished long essays, theses from libraries visited as well as the internet. Both types of data aided the researcher in gathering the benefits, prospects, and feasibility of the bamboo beads fashion accessory industry as an avenue for entrepreneurial skills development in the you.

The researcher used a descriptive, thematic content analysis procedure in analysing the data collected from the interviewees. The data were analysed systematically and transparently, building on the Framework method for data display, originally developed by the National Centre for Social Research (Ritchie *et al*., 2003). A summary of the data gathered was made. The data was then analysed for consistency based on the responses from the interview. This meant that the researcher drew generalizations based on authentic data coupled with personal observation. Comments made by the participants during the interview were documented, analysed and valid conclusions were drawn.

IV. RESULTS

The study explores the benefits and prospects of the beaded accessory industry in the Shama District of the Western Region to ascertain its feasibility as an avenue for providing the Ghanaian youth with entrepreneurial skills. The data collected from the interviewees were analysed using descriptive and thematic content procedures. The demographic profile of study participants is presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Respondents

Participants Demographic Characteristics	Frequency (N=17)	Percentage Distribution (%)
Gender		
Male	7	41.2%
Female	10	58.8%
Education		
JHS	2	11.8
SHS	3	17.6
Professional Certifications	5	29.4
Tertiary Graduates	7	41.2
Age		
21-30	2	11.8
31 to 40	6	35.3
41 to 50 a	6	35.3
Above 50.	3	17.6
Marital Status		
Single	6	35.3
Married	10	58.8
Widowed	1	5.9

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From Table 1, out of the 17 interviewees, 7 (41.2%) were males and 10 (58.8%) were females suggesting that there were more females in the beaded accessory industry in the Shama District than males. Based on age, the majority of the respondents were from the age groups 31 to 50.

This suggests that the respondents were largely adults. The Table 1 data further shows that the majority of the participants were married.

This suggests that they will provide adequate information on the uses of beaded fashion accessories since women are more attached to the beaded accessory industries than their male counterparts. Regarding the respondent's educational background, the majority of them were graduates from tertiary institutions, suggesting that they are highly educated. This made interaction during the interview easier and more relevant information was obtained, as some even suggested that an experiment should be conducted on the chemicals used for the colouring of the beaded fashion accessories produced by the researcher if it would not have a negative impact on the skin.

G. Uses of Beaded Accessory

To solicit the various uses of beaded accessories in the Shama district in order to ascertain the feasibility of the beaded accessory industry to serve as an avenue for entrepreneurial skills development in the youth, respondents were asked several relevant questions.

First, the interviewees were asked to express their opinions about the uses of beaded accessories in the Shama District. The following were their responses:

"...it is worn by royals."
"...it is used for cultural purposes comprising festivals and naming ceremonies".
"...it is worn during traditional weddings ceremonies"
"...women wear them around their waists"
"...it is worn as necklaces/anklets/bracelets for other functions."

Again, on the issue of the various ways people in the Shama District use beaded accessories, these were the interviewees' observations:

"...people use them as earrings/ necklaces/anklets/bracelets".
"...women wore around their waists"
"...people used them to decorate their sewn clothes
"...people used them for bags/purses"
"...people use them as footwear"
"...people use them as hair clips."

When interviewees were asked whether they used beads accessory, these were their narratives:

"...majority claimed they used them."

The interviewees who claimed they used beaded accessories were probed further to explain how they used the beads. Their opinions were expressed in the following:

"...they used them as necklaces/earrings/bracelets"
"...they wore them around their waists"
"...they decorated their dresses with them."

A session of the interviewees claimed they had not used beaded accessories before. They were further probed to explain why they do not use beads. Their reasons are evident in the following narratives:

"...they had no reason to give"
"...they just did not like using them"
"...they did not look comfortable when wearing them."

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From analysis of the interview results, two major themes were evidence which relate to:

1. Personal Preference and 2. Cultural Preference

Narratives that Relate to Personal Preference	*Narratives that Relate to Cultural Preference*
"...women wear them around their waists."	*"...it is worn by royals."*
"...People use them as earrings, necklaces, anklets and bracelets during functions".	*"...it is used for cultural purposes comprising festivals and naming ceremonies".*
"...majority claimed they used them."	*"...it is worn during marriage ceremonies."*
"...people use them as hair clips."	*"...women wear them around their waists."*
"...they had no reason to give"	*"...they used them as necklaces, earrings, bracelets."*
"...they just did not like using them"	*"...they wore them around their waists."*
"...they did not look comfortable when wearing them."	*"...they decorated their dresses with them."*
"...people use them as footwear"	*"...people used them for bags/purses."*
"...people use them as hair clips."	
"...people use them as footwear."	
"...people used them to decorate their sewn cloths."	

V. DISCUSSION

The objective of the study was to explore the benefits and prospects of beaded accessory industry in Shama District of the Western Region and to ascertain its feasibility as an avenue for providing the youth with entrepreneurial skills. The demographic profiles of the respondents show that there were more females in the beaded accessory industry than males in the Shama District. Again, the majority of the respondents belonged to age bracket 31-50, suggesting that the respondents were largely adults. On the basis of marital status, the majority of the participants were married. This suggests that marriage women are more fashionable compared to the male counterparts. Regarding the respondent's educational background, the majority of them were graduates from tertiary institutions, suggesting that they are highly educated and could make choices based on personal experiences.

A. Uses of Beaded Accessory

The various uses of beaded accessory as deduced from interviewees opinions suggests that the beaded accessories had a place in the past in areas of adornment of royals, cultural purposes and beautification purposes. For examples, women worn the beaded accessories around their waist and as necklaces/anklets/bracelets; men and women made beads to decorate their bodies and to fulfill their spiritual needs (White, 1957). This view was supported by Imran (2005) who found that beaded accessory played significant roles in the Egyptian culture and was considered as protection from the dark. The narratives gathered from the study also suggested that the inhabitants of Shama District used beaded accessories. Deducing from the interviewees points of views, it was evidence that the beaded accessories were largely used as earrings/necklaces/anklets/bracelets and as decorative for their dresses. This further submits that the beaded accessories had a place in the past in areas of adornment of royals, cultural purposes, and women beautification. Beads accessory therefore played significant roles as it had religious and supernatural importance in the Egyptian culture and was considered as protection from the dark (Imran, 2005). Regarding the lightness and costs of beaded accessories made from bamboo, it was evident from the participants' opinions that the bamboo beaded accessories are lighter and cheaper than beaded accessories produced from other materials such as stones, silver and gold. According to Rottke (2002) bamboo is used in bead accessory making and forms one of the cheapest materials in accessories industry. Again, the respondents' views were solicited in terms of bamboo beaded accessory colour. When interviewees were asked to choose which colour they would prefer as the finishing to the bamboo beaded accessory, a key choice among the interviewees was silver colour. Studies (Ojo, Bankole, and Femi Kayode, 2006) shows that colour plays a significant role in environmental beautification. They further explained that outdoor beautification and varied spatial positions and sensations of colours in the built environment create visual contrasts which contribute to both human and urban aesthetic development. The perception of the dynamics of colours and their "chroma value" can have a considerable effect on the character of individuals and the environment. Also, evidenced from the opinions of interviewees was that bamboo beaded accessory would be more environmentally friendly compared to the others. Since bamboo is 100% natural, it goes back to nature through the process of decomposition quickly.

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Thus, it can be concluded that introduction of bamboo beaded fashion accessories into the beautification market would be a welcoming venture since more people are really interested in the bamboo beaded accessory. This is a good sign that when rapt attention is given to this venture, it would really gain prominence and serve as an effective avenue for providing entrepreneurial skills to the youth.

VI. CONCLUSIONS

All seventeen interviewees in this study emphasized that the beaded accessories had a significant place in the Shama District of the Western Region, emphasizing areas of decoration of royals, cultural and spiritual purposes, and in women prettification. Undoubtedly, they adopted bamboo beaded fashion accessories as light in weight, more durable, more environmentally friendly, and has easy production characteristics, with easily available materials compared to the other types made from stone, gold, and silver. Nonetheless, the potential colour preferred by all interviewees for the bamboo beaded accessory as the finishing is the silver.

Certainly, one could argue that the bamboo beaded fashion accessory could gain prominence in the local market if given prudence. This evidence suggests that the feasibility of beaded accessory industry, when expanded, can serve as an avenue for providing the Ghanian youth with entrepreneurial skills.

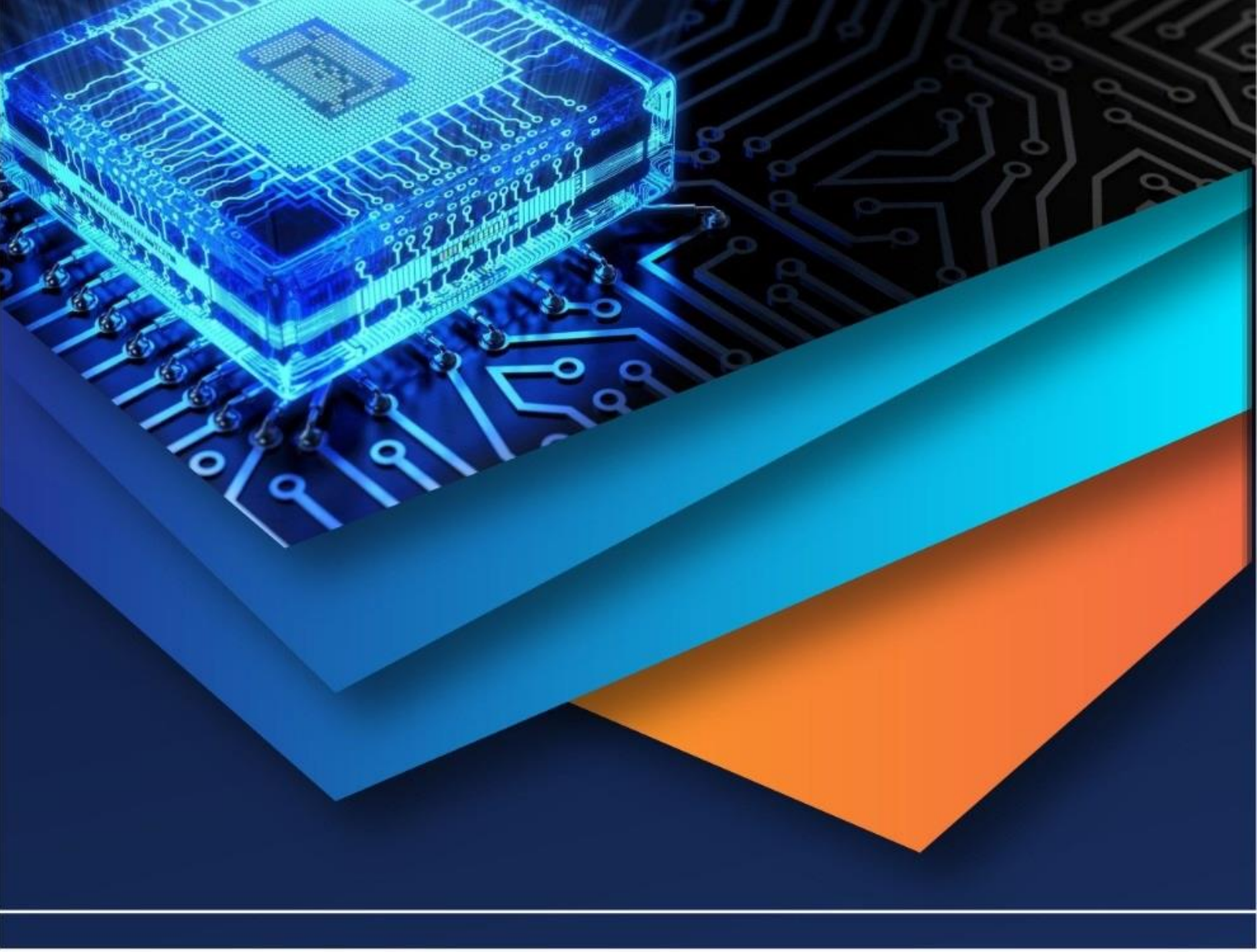
VII. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings from the study, it is recommended that in the face of this current unemployment rate among the youth in Ghana, the government should liaise with the chiefs to establish small bamboo fashion accessories industries at the places where there are bamboo plantations. Clearly, future research should continue to examine the general uses of beaded accessories across the country and with increased sample size in order to make more informed generalizations about the relevance of bead accessories across the country.

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