Austrian high-end quality embroideries as integral part of West African cultures

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In an environment in which the globalization affects numerous people in a direct way, in which quality decides over rapid business and in which individual partnerships are more important and long-lasting than narrow-minded price discussions, the strategy for specified high quality Austrian Embroideries is becoming more important.

The motivation for this project is based on learning from history of more than 500 years of trading with textiles between West Africa and Europe. Still today, there are the same factors and mechanisms used for doing business. New things are as well absorbed instantly and transformed into the existing tradition. Also fashion is a typical western phenomenon; the things which are counting in the African world are the traditional ones. Traditional clothing still is a symbol of status, reputation, wealth, etc. Furthermore money for high qualitative and valuable products is still available. But the product itself must be developed, marketed and sold in a 100% true-package to the customer. Therefore, copied, cheap, low quality and second-hand textiles are only a way to be “decorated” in the correct cultural way even for people with little money. One of the only existing USPs of Europe is the richness of creativity and the close relationship to African customers. In this project, creativity is the main driver for staying in front of the competitors in the high-end African embroidery market.

The project objectives therefore are the exploration of the niche for Austrian Embroideries, to recognize the key factors of designing embroideries for different African cultures and to identify the key factors for trading in West Africa.

The methodology is divided into three levels: Yesterday – Today – Tomorrow. The “Yesterday” part is developed based on existing literature in the fields of ethnography, cultural aspects, religion, art, strategy and marketing. This is followed by the “Today” part, which is a concentration on the actual situation in Austria, Europe, Africa, Asia and Near Middle East done in a qualitative way (e.g. observation, interviews, and photo documentation) directly in West Africa. Finally, the “Tomorrow” part consists of the combination of specific challenges for the Austrian Embroideries in West Africa as well as international best practices which lead to a positioning for the Austrian Embroideries and thereof important project propositions.

This project can contribute to new knowledge by developing a research model in the future for specific high-end products. The conclusions derived from this model could be the recognizing of the importance of the eye-level, the awareness of the customers´ background in nation, religion, tradition, and the usage of the customers language to market the niche of the product successfully with different marketing activities.

Silke Jurkowitsch and Alexander Sarlay were born in the western part of Austria: They grew up with a long fashion tradition in their living area and have a wide ranged experience working together with textiles, decorative and crystal components.

Their know-how about textile and crystal business opens new innovation projects in every industry. A main focus is on opportunities and chances in different parts of Africa. Today they live as real cosmopolitans, most of the time they are travelling between Africa, Middle East and Asia. Their alliance combines cross-cultural creativity, leading global business networks in different branches and professional Project Management.

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