



Function Of Textile Designs And Fashion As Potential Tools For Sustainable Development In Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

The fact remained that Textile designs and fashion part of the culture and a potential means of economic development of a society and nation like Nigeria at large from time immemorial. Textile has been one among the basic human need; apart of shelter food and water. However, the attention given to textile industry is nothing to write home about. The economic drive of any nation is majorly routed on generation of income from any possible source, be it internal or external. However, as Nigeria operates on monogamous economy based on oil exportation, textile and fashion should be considered as an alternative and veritable source for economic development. This paper explores a number of ways and ideas by which untapped economic potentials of textile design and fashion can be tapped in order to improve the economy for sustainable development; textile design and fashion in their formal and esthetic richness are hitherto the cannons to explore. The paper concludes that international channels in particular should be provided for the distribution of textile design and fashion as commodities which will earn the country foreign exchange mostly required for economic development.

Keywords: Textile designs and fashion, Sustainable economy and Foreign exchange

INTRODUCTION

Textile industries have traditionally been the starting point of economic autonomy. The industrial revolutions of England and United States both began with textiles. The Republic of China, Korea, Taiwan, Singapore and Hong Kong are all success stories; each expanded its manufacturing capabilities after beginning with textile (Frazer, 2017). The textile industry is a good economic development starting point because it can employ unskilled workers, train them and make them skillful in a particular production process; Nigeria has a huge supply of unskilled workers due to its large population and other factors such as pervasive poverty and illiteracy. In addition to a large pool of labour, Northern Nigeria also has available land suitable for cultivation of cotton which is the main raw materials for textile industry (Babadoko, 2007 and Yusuf, 2015). Handmade traditional textiles have been produced in Nigeria for many years but real industrial production of textile is a recent activity. However, Textile mills in Kaduna and Kano from inception were conceived as vertically integrated mills to process locally sourced raw materials through spinning for production of yarn, weaving for the production of grey cloth, dyeing, printing and finishing for the production of finished textiles (Aguiyi, Ukachia Onyegbulum and Nwankwo, 2011).

However, the textile industry is classified into traditional and modern textiles (Olajide and Joseph, 2009; Makinde, Olusegun and Ajiboye; 2015). The traditional cloth weaving method and handmade textile is an old culture among the Nigerians in both rural and urban cities of Bida, Benin, Illorin, Iseyin, Okene, Sokoto, Borno and Kano (Olajide and Joseph, 2009; Nwachukwu and Ibebakuchi, 2014). Olatayo,

Akande and Fadina (2012) highlight that the traditional Nigerian communities had developed indigenous technology for their textile material production and the raw materials obtained from the local environment. The above assertion is also consistent with earlier study of (Ojo, 1966); (Afigbo and Okeke, 1985) which advocate that archeological findings indicated that local technology in carding, spinning, dyeing and weaving had been in practice and part of life of indigenous textile manufacturers in the pre-colonial era.

The textile produce from locally source raw materials according to Uwameiye, and Osho, (2015) cited in Yusuf (2011) are cotton, local silk, bark, goat skins, wool to raffia. Nwachukwu and Ibebabuchi (2012), Olutayo, and Akanle, (2009); Keane, and te Velde, (2008).also classified traditional textile product into hand woven, non-woven, patterned or dyed with different names and specifications based on the traditions and customs of people. These include; the Igbos (*Akwete* cloth), Yorubas (*Asoke*, *Asoebi*, or *Adire*), Hausas (Kura), the Nupes (*Kpasa*), Okene – Ebira (*Ashiasha*). Though, *Adire* cloth is of two types as narrated by Okoli, (2013) cited in Yusuf (2015), One *Adire* is made by stitching the design with *raffia* and the second system is to stenciled it, using a starchy paste produced from Cassava or Yam. Other similar products are; *Ankara* fabric, *Aso-ebi*, *Buba wrapper* etc. These traditional fabrics according to Arubayi, (2010) are of good quality, textual, high durability, unique characteristics and a means of identification of Nigerian people from different backgrounds and diverse regions.

The modern textile industry in Nigeria developed to produce fiber production, spinning, weaving, knitting, lace and embroidery makings, carpet production, and printing, dyeing and finishing processes. In the recent past, textile industry was the highest employer of labour after the civil service (Manufacturers Association of Nigeria, 2017). The capacity utilization in the industry improved between the periods 1986 – 1993 with backward integration program instituted by many firms in the industry following government policy on the sector. The modern textile firms woven fabrics expanded with many designs showing better, qualitative and complicated textile products using automated power looms with yarns of various colours skillfully used in the production line (Makinde *et al.*, 2015 and Yusuf, 2015). The industry is made up of series of interrelated processes from production of fibers and items of clothing to distribution of the end product to consumers. The market for the industry according to Obunadike, (2013) is split between broad categories of products: textile for clothing, textile for home and decoration and textile for technical or industrial use.

Nigeria also embraced this modern method of textile production through the various textile industries established in various parts of the country. This is not to say that the indigenous way of textile production such as tie-dye, weaving, batik, wax and starch resist have been jettisoned. Wax resist technique in particular has been in use in some African countries such as Ghana, Senegal, Sierra-Leone and the Republic of Benin and Nigeria inclusive (Polakoff 1980). Ajayi (2002) state that the indigenous methods are an important aspects of the history of textile and clothing (fashion) because they have informed and enhanced the economic, social, cultural and political status of many nations.

Some countries which textile and fashion have helped in strengthening their economy include India, France, China, Japan and Indonesia and Italy among others. Therefore, for Nigeria to tap the full economic potentials of textile design and fashion as envision it has to follow the examples of the aforementioned countries which have not only invested massively in textiles and fashion, but made these commodities mainstays of their economy.

Meaning of the Economic Development

Orji (2014) referred to economic development as the quantitative and qualitative changes identified in the economy. Suffice it to say that for any implementation strategies in the area of economic development of a nation like Nigeria, one must also be considering or making references to factors that can bring such development to bear. Ohene (2002) highlights that the economic development of a nation is predicated upon the overall development of national resources both human, environment and material required for the total national well being at present without compromising the growth in the future. With regards to Nigeria, the most important factor is the readiness of the nation to recognize and explore other sectors that can enrich the economy in other to compliment her mono-casual economy rooted on oil exportation.

It is worthy to note that the development of Nigeria's economy requires a strong mobilization of other sectors such as textile design and fashion in order to achieve a virile economic stand. Purposeful drive in harnessing envisions economic potentials of textile design and fashion need to be strategies and pursued in full context to boost the country's economy.

The whole world seems to be moving towards a global textile and fashion consciousness and awareness in the sense that they have become part of the mainstream and universal commodity that can transform the economy of any nation sustainable life. Sunmonu (2008) argued that no nation can be said to develop without a virile textile industry.

Textile design and fashion as well as their associated related activities such as modeling, economic, religions, social, or cultural or political values have their stand in history. The weaving and designing of cloth and by extension and its uses as fashion have been very significant to mankind. Famuyide (1998) narrated that fashion and textiles are inseparable. Ogunduyile (2003) informs that it has been noted that the study of fashion and textiles is also the study of mankind. Onobrakpeya (2009) sights that textile design and their use as dress fashion and cloth occupy a high place and is foremost in the expression of a people's identity. Ajayi (2002) indicated that in most countries of the world, clothing has been adjudged an essential aspect of life. Human beings therefore cannot do without involving textiles and fashion in their daily existence. Therefore, it is evident that textiles and fashion occupy a high place in the people's world view as they are exclusive characteristic to human and featured prominently in human societies. Textiles and wearing clothes existed from time immemorial. Chukueggu and Cyril- Egware (2009) holds the view that, textile is one of the earliest forms of human artistic expressions and reflects man's environment, society as well as community. Anthropologists believed that due to harsh weather conditions such as heat, cold and rain, man adapted animal skins and vegetation as body protection as they move from one place to another. It is also observed that body covering might have been invented first for magic, decoration, cult or prestige and later found to be beneficial as well (Wikipedia, History of Clothing and Textile).

Textile design and fashion which no doubt are a part of important commodities available in x-raying human history also reflects part of the civilization and the later involvement of local and modern technologies in producing it. Ogunduyile (2003) reiterate that as the society became more complex, discoveries were also made in weaving, embroidery indigo dyeing and resist techniques which further enhanced the emergence of clothes. According to Encyclopedia of textile (1960) textile origins from the Latin word "texere" (to weave), but today the term is encompassing as it accommodates different techniques such as felting or spin fibers into yarn and by extension netting, knit or weaving to produce fabrics. Oguntona (1986) hold the view that textiles are signifying the production of colored pattern through various methods on various fabrics. Sieber (1972) opines that textile is a woven and dyed material. Chukwunyere (1996) notes the product of textile include mat, mosquito net, rope and all items produced through the weaving technique. However, it is imperative to note that the diverse ways by which textile design and fashion are produced as well as their history based on available literature of which there might be gaps, their local production and later transformation into various mechanized modern forms, productions and uses can be explored in economic development and human empowerment for self-reliance.

Economic Potentials of Textile Design

Economic Potentials of Textile and fashion found in various cultural festivities in Nigeria cannot be over emphasized. However, the fact reminds that every society has its own diversify cultural and economic value. To this end, the diverse colorful and rich cultural festivals in Nigeria that exhibit rich and diverse cultural heritage of textiles and fashion is considered as veritable source of foreign exchange. In Nigeria, there are many festivals that attract a panoramic display and array of royal costumes and garments in their rich variety textile attires which attracts both local and foreign interest and value. These festivals have gone a long way in enhancing the socio-cultural image of Nigeria both locally and internationally. The custodians of these festivals such as the Emirs, Kings, Chiefs, Obis, Obas and other title holders and their personages adorn themselves in rich royal costumes and other paraphernalia associated with each

distinguished ethnic group. These costume repertoires are used sparingly only on special periods such as festivals and other important occasions.

Dress culture display rich and diverse historical costume during festivities have no doubt bequeathed to the nation a renowned textile and dress culture which are unique and compete favorably with any tradition elsewhere within Africa continent. And in fact due to the prestigious and exquisite nature of this costume, they have continued to attract foreign attention.

Modern staging of fashion shows regularly the country's ingenuity in textile design and fashion at both local and international platforms and arena are unique avenues if properly explored that can be a panacea to enrich and sustain the economy development. The showcasing of these artistic fashion resources and heritage no doubt will improve on the creativity of the local textile designers in the sense that they will be expose to other design possibilities for better improvement. These showcasing can attract tourists and designers. The uses of locally woven or produced fabrics which have indigenous value and artistically creative in tailoring modern wears have been the favorite of many foreigners and Nigerians. The foreigners in particular not only purchase some of these wears, but catalogues and even pay the indigenous designers train them on local creation techniques and styles. This development will not only awakens local designer, but honor, prestige and enhance the image of Nigeria. More so, it can attract more monies from the sales as aforementioned as well as business contacts that will bring about stability and expansion.

There is no gainsaying that the financial gains for staging fashion shows is very viable. If government can fully harness its potentials for economic growth by continuously provide the necessary machinery and enabling environment required organizing a fashion show of international standard of which will create more awareness for values inherent in textile design and fashion as number of people who will appreciate these commodities will increase.

Apart from regular shows, an exhibition of textile and fashion commodities periodically both at local and international venues is a good way to create more awareness and advertise Nigerian textile and fashion sector as this will attract income to the designers, bring progress to the society by enriching the economy from income such exhibition will attract. More so, exhibition forum not only provides the opportunity for creating awareness and appreciation to the exhibits as well as recognition to the designers, but exchange of ideas for growth and continuous trade and business. The significance of textile and fashion exhibition in national economic growth will manifest positive result if encouraged. Government therefore needs to play its part by exploring the economic gains of sponsoring exhibitions of textile design and fashion commodities by supporting the designers in several ways such as providing adequate space, massive finance and other logistics.

Textile and fashion have the potentials to stimulate entrepreneurship that will be purpose oriented and bring economic benefits. Textile design and fashion business no doubt are profession with good prospects as it provides divers way for one to generate economy. Fashion trend changes as new styles are introduced periodically which means the commodity will be in constant demand. Textile design and fashion production in most cases require little income to start and the business enlarges in a short while because dress is a living culture of everyday life and activity (Aniakor, 1999). More so, textile design and fashion production or business offers more stable prospect for economic growth since the sector does not witness economic fluctuations such as found in other sectors such as oil, banking and exportation of agro based products. Vast majority of youths graduating out of school instead of looking for white collar jobs should be encouraged to take up textile design and fashion business in other to check this trend. It is a fact that economically textile design and fashion business is not a single market, but a whole family of markets with different prices, can be located anywhere and attracts several different buyers and clients.

Textile design and fashion can also be used in the stimulation of local economy through job creation. Nigeria due to its mono economy which depends largely on oil export as earlier mentioned has brought about a battered economy, unemployment and underemployment because the oil sector cannot absorb the teaming unemployed population. One of the most reasonable ways to check unemployment and economic expansion can be massive investment in both private and government driven textile and fashion industries so that both they can accommodate large number of persons. It has been noted that in Britain, France,

Italy and the US, textile and fashion industries generate large revenue income and this has effect on employment. With adequate government support, textile and fashion sector can be a veritable source that can trigger economic development through the employment of talented and skilled personnel, such as tailors, textile technologists, and artists. Others that this sector can accommodate include people in specialized areas of textiles such as male and female models, sales representatives and auxiliary staff in a situation where the outfit is large. The products of these outfits can be distributed or channeled to some local retailers or merchants who sell in local markets and who are closest to the final consumers. With these developments in place more people will acquire the product, more income will be generated and circulated within the localities, and new business and markets can spring up.

Textile design and fashion sector can create a sustainable business links for the standard growth of the economy. Since textile design and fashion outfits depend largely on local sources for raw material in order to sustain their business, they have to engage the services or get in contact with the local farmer who cultivates and provides the primary raw material required in their production process, particularly cotton. This however, means that these textile design and fashion outfit do not require to import whatever the local farmer has to provide for their production thereby taking out the country's local currency, but instead such funds or investment on raw materials go back or circulate within the local sources where they are acquired or to the local farmer. This business chain or links do not only sustain both the textile design and fashion outfit and the local farmer, but also helps to stabilize the country's economy.

Among the ethnic groups in Nigeria, locally made fabrics are produced by several organized cottages and on the verandas of some entrepreneurs. Locally produced fabrics are still in high demand and valued commodity. According to Stella (2002), locally made fabrics still have high prestige over the industrial ones and that they are highly valued compared with industrial ones. Some of available valuable and precious locally made fabrics include *akwete* cloth provided by pockets of cottages in Ndoki area in Igbo land and *akwa-ocha* hand woven cloth by the Aniocha people also in Igbo land. Among the Yoruba come the popular *Aso-oke* as well as *sanya*, *alarin* and *etu*. Among the Tiv, traditional weavers produce *tugudu*, *anger*, *ashisha* and *gberave*. The cottages in Epira produce varieties of local fabrics known as *okene* cloths done in vertical looms. These aforementioned weaving traditions generate high income for the local weavers, as well as enhance the social and economic status of Nigeria both at local and international levels.

RECOMMENDATION

Government therefore should be aware of the need to sustain these local fabric productions in order to enjoy their full economic values. To this end, the full cooperation of the government is required in order to encourage and accelerate the growth of local cloth weaving industries not only making sufficient standard facilities, but also providing avenues for international markets.

CONCLUSION

This paper, attempts to grapple with the conceptual attributes of and economic potentials of textile design and fashion in economic development of Nigeria. It also highlights various ways by which these commodities can be explored for the country's economic growth. In examining the economic potentials of textile design and fashion as export commodities for both local and foreign exchange earnings, it recommends effective implementation strategies through which they will be packaged especially for export trade that will bring positive results. The end result of the entire picture is that textile design and fashion are not only good viable sources of income for the producers but also have enormous and immense potentials for the country's economic advancement.

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