THE USE OF NIGERIAN TEXTILES IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF TAILORED GARMENTS FOR WOMEN: A CASE STUDY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA, NSUKKA, COMMUNITY

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ABSTRACT

This study was aimed at ascertaining the use of Nigerian textiles in the construction of tailored garments among women in the University of Nigeria, Nsukka community. The population for the study comprised all female staff and students in the university community. A sample of 100 females was randomly selected for the study, seventy female students and 30 female staff. To carry out the investigation, information was sought on the extent of use of Nigerian textiles among the respondents; their level of acceptance of the use of Nigerian textiles in the construction of tailored garments; constraints in the use of Nigerian textiles for tailored garments as well as the sources of acquisition of their tailored garments among others. Data were collected through structured questionnaire. Percentages were used to analyze the data. The result of the study showed that only 32% of the respondents occasionally use Nigerian textiles for making tailored garments while 68% had none of their tailored garments made from Nigerian textiles. Some of the reasons given for non-usage include non-durability of fabric and poor workmanship. However, it is interesting to note that the respondents expressed the desire to acquire tailored garments made from Nigerian textiles if the problems identified are addressed.

Keywords: Nigerian textiles, Tailored garments, Garment construction, Tailoring.

INTRODUCTION

Textile production has been a booming industry world-wide. In Nigeria for instance, the textile industry has been identified as a major employer of labour (Toye, 2005). Textile has become a general term for fibers, yarns and other materials that can be made into fabrics or cloths and the resulting material itself (Corbman, 1983). Thus thread, cords, ropes, laces, nets and fabrics are all textiles. In this work, the term textile simply represents woven cloth or fabric. In addition to satisfying human need for protection and adornment, textiles and garments provide media for artistic expression for weavers, dyers, tailors and clothing designers (Vanderhoff et al., 1985).

In Nigeria, there are many peculiar designs by which certain ethnic groups are identified. The ‘akwete’ cloth for instance, is produced mainly in Akwete; a town in Southern Igbo land. Adire, is a name given by the Yorubas to their indigo resist dyed cloth. They also produce the aso-oke cloth by which they have gained world-wide recognition (Okeke, 1990). The Fulanis are known for the production of a woven cloth called ‘kassa’ while the Ibibios produce the ‘ukatt’. Many other tribes in Nigeria have different types of locally produced textiles. These indigenous fabrics are mostly woven from locally grown cotton. Cotton is strong, absorbent, comfortable to wear, and washable (Waber, 1990). Modern textile firms involved in large scale production are also located in different parts of Nigeria.

Nigerian markets today are flooded with “dutch wax” prints from these textile firms. Most of the textile industries in West African countries manufacture cloth decorated with “dutch wax” prints as well as other prints on special request (Vanderhoff et al., 1985). Genuine Dutch wax cloth imported from Europe are also widely recognized as “African prints” despite their foreign origin. Nigerian textile fabrics referred to in this study therefore include all these “African prints” or locally produced cloth decorated with “dutch wax” prints as well as the indigenous ones like aso-okes, akwetes among others.
Despite the large volume of business in Nigerian textiles, western clothing is still considered fashionable in contemporary African countries including Nigeria. In tertiary institutions especially in the Southern part of Nigeria, the mode of dressing tends towards formal wears, most of which are imported ready-to-wear or used clothing.

In the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, the staff and students are engaged mostly in activities such as lectures, academic meetings, seminars, workshops, conferences and other formal gathering. There are prescribed standard of dressing (dress code) for these occasions. The type of dress or garment most suited for these occasions is tailored garment. The word tailor is derived from a French word “tallie” meaning to form or to shape. A tailored garment is one that has underlining materials which shapes and supports the garment form. Tailored garment is fitted unlike draped garment and has an impact on the image of the wearer (Marshall, Jackson, Stanley, Kefgen and Tochie-Specht, 2000). The garment design lines are defined and the garment is given a permanent shape and structure of its own. A tailored garment is either hard or soft tailored. A hard tailored garment is made with a firm and stiff fabric or cloth with well formed details and extensive built-in-shaping (Ledbetter and Lansing 1981). It is commonly seen in men’s suit. Soft tailored garments are made from softer fabrics. They are considered more feminine. 

Tailored garments are mostly imported into the country or constructed locally using imported textiles. Within the past ten years or so, Nigeria has been importing more garments than she exports. Due to the mass importation as well as smuggling of textiles into the country, many textile industries are being forced to close down resulting in huge trade deficits. From 1995 to 2000, fifty textile firms across the country have been shut down NUTGTW (2004). They also noted that 174 textile industries that were functional before 1994 have been reduced to 40 with about 30,000 job losses. Data from the Federal Office of Statistics (FOS) shows a similar trend (see Table 1). 

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Domestic Production</th>
<th>Imports</th>
<th>Total Imports</th>
<th>Imports (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>13.56</td>
<td>13.19</td>
<td>26.75</td>
<td>49.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>23.36</td>
<td>15.23</td>
<td>38.59</td>
<td>39.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>31.70</td>
<td>28.19</td>
<td>59.89</td>
<td>47.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>328.77</td>
<td>23.17</td>
<td>351.94</td>
<td>6.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>338.62</td>
<td>256.31</td>
<td>594.93</td>
<td>43.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>340.19</td>
<td>29.72</td>
<td>369.91</td>
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<td>1997</td>
<td>349.75</td>
<td>196.15</td>
<td>545.90</td>
<td>35.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>358.54</td>
<td>601.93</td>
<td>960.47</td>
<td>62.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>1999</td>
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<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>1,222.72</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Table 1: Import and Domestic Production of Garments (£ million)

The table showed the values of imports of garments, covering articles of apparel and clothing as well as worn clothing and articles, over the period of 1991 to 2001. It also showed the value of domestic output of garment over the corresponding years.

The table showed an unexplained sudden increase, by an order of magnitude, in the value of domestic production of garments over 1993/1994. A similar phenomenon occurred in the value of imports over 1994/1995 and 1996/1997, although the sudden increase was less severe in 1996/1997. Though such large changes in value may have occurred, they nevertheless raise concerns over the accuracy of the data, an often encountered feature of official statistics reported in the country.

The above concern notwithstanding, one may deduce that in spite of some fluctuations the overall value of imported garments is greater than that domestically produced. If this trend is allowed to continue, the textile industries in the next few years may be facing total collapse. This is a challenge. To address this problem NUTGTW (2004), noted that Nigerian government has suspended the importation of textiles into the country. This may be partly due to the save-our-soul campaign by unions such as National Union of Textile, Garment and Tailoring Workers of Nigeria (NUTGTWN) and National Union of Textile Manufacturers Association (NUTMA) among others. In order to sustain the textile industries, there is need to promote greater consumption of Nigerian textiles. One of such ways is by using the locally produced textiles for constructing tailored garments which are
worn for most occasions in our academic institutions, ministries and parastatals.

This study was to find out the use of Nigerian textiles in the construction of tailored garments amongst women in the University of Nigeria, Nsukka community. Specifically, the study sought to establish the extent of use of Nigerian textiles among the respondents; their level of acceptance for the use of Nigerian textile in the construction of their tailored garments; constraints in the use of Nigerian textiles for constructing tailored clothing as well as the sources of acquisition of their tailored apparel.

METHODOLOGY

The population of the study comprised all staff and students in University of Nigeria, Nsukka. A multi-stage sampling technique was employed. The first stage sampling was the selection of one out of nine Faculties in Nsukka Campus of the University. In the second stage sampling, a 100 was selected out of the population of 870 females of the selected faculty which comprised of 800 students and 70 staff. Proportionate random sampling technique was then used to select 70 female students and 30 female staff from the total number of 100 females used for the study.

A structured questionnaire was used for data collection. It was developed through literature review based on the objectives of the study. The initial draft of the instrument was face validated by two home economics lecturers and one lecturer in Educational Measurement and Evaluation. Based on their suggestions, some items in the questionnaire were modified. The instrument were administered to the respondents by hand and collected within one week. The data collected were analyzed using percentages as presented in the discussion of results.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Respondents were asked to indicate whether they use Nigerian textile in making their garments. Almost all (96%) have garments made from Nigerian textiles. The respondents were also asked to indicate why they use Nigerian textiles in the construction of their garments. The summary of the data are presented in Fig 1.

![Fig. 1: Reasons for use of Nigerian Textile Fabrics](image)
Fig 1 shows that the main reason for the use of Nigerian textiles in the construction of their garments is that it is beautiful (25%) and cheap (21%). Other reasons included availability (16%) as well as comfort (14%). This is in agreement with Khaminwa (2001) who observed that clothing in Africa as elsewhere has been used for covering the body as well as for adornment among others. Furthermore, most of the Nigerian textiles are cotton-based like the Akwete and Adire. Cotton fabrics are known to be comfortable to wear (Weber, 1990). They conduct heat away from the body and in turn cool the body. Cotton fabric is affordable and within reach of most income levels.

Fig. 2: Use of Nigerian textiles in construction of tailored garments

Fig 2 shows that majority of the respondents, (68%), do not have tailored garments that are made from Nigerian textiles. Only few (27%) have tailored garment made from Nigerian textiles. It therefore goes to indicate that they use Nigerian textiles for sewing other kinds of apparel but not mostly for constructing tailored garments. Much of the activities they are engaged in like lecturing and other formal occasions require the use of tailored garments. It is therefore possible that they use imported tailored garments or ones constructed from imported textiles. The respondents are therefore providing market for labour from other countries other than their own.

Information was sought on the average amount spent on tailored garment (Fig 3). Nearly half of the respondents (47%) indicated they spent between ₦2,000 to ₦5,000 on one tailored garment. Respondents were also asked to state the source of acquiring tailored garments. Most of them (30%) indicated they wear imported tailored garments while few (14%) wear tailored garments constructed locally. The massive importation and smuggling of garments have been responsible for the shutting down of about 130 textile industries and about 30,000 job between 1999 to 2000 NUTGTW (2004). This situation has led to huge trade deficit.

Fig 4: Reason for non-usage of Nigerian textile in construction of tailored garment

Respondents were asked to give their reasons for non-usage of Nigerian textiles in
the construction of their tailored garments. Among the reasons for non-usage of Nigerian textile as shown is poor durability as well as poor quality of workmanship by some local tailors. The summary of the data are presented in Fig 4.

Tailoring is the process by which the garment design lines are defined and the garment is given a permanent shape and structure of its own (Ledbetter, 1981). That one can sew does not necessarily mean that one can tailor. Tailoring is a building and moulding process, and it demands exactness. This may well be the reason why the respondents indicated poor quality of workmanship as one of the reasons for non-usage of tailored garments from Nigerian textile. It may well be that some or many of tailors lack tailoring skills. Besides, poor quality tailored garment will also negatively affect the image of the wearer. Marshall et al (2000) observed that tailored garments have an impact on the image of the wearer, that is, the total impression received regarding a person.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION
The fact that majority of the respondents (96%) use Nigerian textiles in constructing their garments is very encouraging. The Nigerian textile industries have suffered a lot of set back due to importation of textiles. It is quite obvious that the suspension of imported textiles by the Nigerian government is yielding the desired result. Even when these imported textiles succeed in getting into the country, their prices is quite high. Among the reasons expressed by respondents for patronizing Nigerian textiles is the relatively cheap price. The study also revealed that most of the respondents (68%) have none of their tailored garments made from Nigerian textiles. They bought imported ones or use imported textiles to construct these garments. About 47% of them spent between ₦2,000 to ₦5,000 solely on imported tailored garment. Data from the FOS also revealed the noticeable increase in the volume of imported garments to the detriment of Nigerian economy. Import indicates a gap in domestic supply of what a country needs but is unable to provide. By importing more textiles than she is exporting, it means that Nigeria is providing market for labour in another country to the detriment of her own. Other countries like Ghana and Mali have already globalised their clothing industries using their indigenous textiles; to construct foreign styles of dresses. Constructing tailored garments from Nigerian textiles is a step toward creating jobs as well as revamping the Nigerian economy.

The study also revealed that the respondents encountered some constraints in the use of Nigerian textiles which discouraged them from using them in tailored garments. However, 96% of them expressed the view that they would use Nigerian textiles for constructing tailored garments if the stated problems could be resolved.

In conclusion, therefore, promoting the use of Nigerian textiles in the construction of tailored garments for women is a worthwhile venture. This is because Nigeria is undoubtedly rich in a variety of textiles. Both the production of the textiles and the construction of garments from these textiles are sources of livelihood for individuals and also job creating enterprises for Nigerians. Garment making or apparel industries are among the largest employer of labour worldwide. It is hoped that the findings of this study will promote greater consumption of Nigerian textiles in order to sustain the country’s textile industries as well as provide employment opportunities for those who have tailoring skills.

REFERENCES


