



Increase in Patronage of Printed Fabrics “Ankara” As a Wearable Dress for Ceremonial Occasions

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Abstract: *The centrality of cloth in the life of humans is rather incontestable. Clothing is the most basic necessities of life, such as food and shelter. It is, therefore, needful to human being as the daily need. Modern day Ankara prints, have been picking up steam amongst the young and the old. Today, Ankanra can also be worn as tops on skirts or trousers for both men and women. Accessories like purses, hand bags and jewelleryes are added to bring out the very best in the fashionista's looks. In addition, part of the decency that human being desires is provided by cloth. This paper is to focus on the accessibility of printed fabrics for ceremonial purposes. However, it appears that not many people understand cloth beyond being a wearing apparel. This work is carried out on increase in patronage of printed fabrics “Ankara as a wearable dress for ceremonial occasions like wedding, naming, burial ceremonial e.t.c.*

Key Words: *Increase, patronage, printed African, Ankara and occasions.*

1. INTRODUCTION:

Initially, during 19th century these fabrics were used to be hand-woven. Later, a Belgian printer developed a method of imprinting with the help of machines. However, the machine-made versions of African prints developed splits and imperfections. Later, developments being made to remove the imperfections of machine-made print fabrics are being introduced to the west-African markets both by Dutch and Europeans. Years, later this new way of printing and designs by Africans received eyes of many other country traders. Apart from giving a new, authentic look the African print fabric carry their own set of advantages over other types of fabrics. Let's look at few such add-ons that are making this fabric much famous irrespective of the country of production and sale, That was a couple of years ago. All that has changed as our designers through a dint of hard work and persistence in spite of rejection put Ankara on Nigeria catwalk. Today, like the biblical rejected stone, the printed fabrics “Ankara” has become the cornerstone of fashion. The bright colors which was once a reason for rejection is now our strong point. Meanwhile, Africans are identified with brightness, vivacity, fun and life and these bright colors attest to that. With Ankara, there is no end to its possibilities. Ankara today, not only graces catwalks across the continent but also many red carpets.

1.1. Historical Development Of African Printed Fabric:

Printed fabric is known by many names such as Dutch wax print, Real English wax, Veritable Java Print and many more. This fabric has become the epitome of our ‘Africanness’ but it has a diverse and complex history. The issue of the popularity of the fabric in Africa is debated. What is certain is that the fabric started off as an imitation of the Indonesian batik locally produced in Java. Through colonization by the Europeans and Dutch, the Fabric spread through several continents. After being colonized by the Dutch, the Javanese Batik was introduced to Holland and other part of Europe but it did not gain popularity. This triggered textile industrialization as the Van Vliissingers established a company in 1894 which mass produced these fabrics in Europe. They are now known as today's Vlisco brand. There are various views on how the fabric entered the African market. Some are of the opinion that Dutch freighters on their ways to Indonesia from Europe dropped these textiles at different African ports. Regardless of how the Dutch print entered into Africa, it is here to stay. It found a more enthusiastic market in the Nigeria and later spread to other parts of West Africa.



With a new target base in Africa, Dutch textile industries made some changes to the motif designs to better suit the African market. Although this took more time and effort, we can see that it was worth it. The market grew even bigger. From mid-20th century, motifs of local leaders were manufactured so that people could buy in order to celebrate their leaders (so if you think your church material started today, think again). This continued as in the 1950s African head of States and Political leaders were used as design motifs. This integration into the African society has made them authentically African. Until the 1960s, most wax sold in Africa was made in Europe. After colonization, things changed. The question of authenticity is yet to be answered. Can Ankara be called African print? Well, they cannot be compared to our Adire or Aso-Oke (that is left for weddings and special occasions). One thing is for sure. If we don't promote our own fabrics, they will ultimately fizzle out of existence. This doesn't mean we are expected to kick Dutch wax out of our continent; we have to just put our locally made fabric on the same playing field.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW:

2.1. The Beauty African Textiles:

The creation of spectacular material using wax is not a new innovation. The method originated in Holland in the 1800's when a merchant, traveling to Java, saw the people wearing exotic clothing and brought a description of the wax process home. This Holland Wax Fabrics was then introduced to Africa in the 1900's, was instantly accepted, and has become the most widely used textile. Murray (1999) describes the weaving activities of women in Omu-Aran in Ilorin province as a craft done mainly to serve domestic needs. Working on the theme of African culture and beliefs, the Dutch wax fabrics designed bold and enthralling patterns with predominating bright browns, yellows, and reds. This patterned fabric, now known as the African Wax Print, has received worldwide attention. As the African Dress Style of the nation, it is highly sought after by those in the upper class and are proudly worn as an indication of their sophistication and knowledge of the latest trends in African dress fashion and African fashion design.

To produce this material a wax-resistant dyeing technique is used. A design is drawn onto the material with hot wax after which it is dipped in the dye. The dye does not penetrate the wax. While, originally this was a long process that was done by hand, there are now machines which perform this operation. An additional benefit to the material prepared this way is that the pattern is printed on both sides of the material making it more versatile. This fabric is breathtaking to behold. Its outstanding beauty cannot be matched and has caught world-wide attention. Fashion shows, which display these amazing creations, are always filled capacity and have a huge number of sales. The outstanding designs are now being adapted to home and office decorating schemes as well where bright, striking colors are desired.

It requires a great deal of experience and technique to design this material. The designers involved are top of the line and continue to produce outstanding patterns, which appeal to their varied clientele. Many times, they travel to the various areas of Africa to learn about their myths and legends in order to incorporate them into the design elements of the material. The result is that many people can recognize the material as originating from their location. Perani and Wolff (1999) explained that African people have developed rich textile traditions and distinctive forms of dress to communicate and enhance cultural meanings. In any one cultural context, a particular type of cloth or dress item can be a visible sign, clearly signaling gender, social status and political office.

African women love to wear garments that represent their country and it become so popular and considered as national dress. Whether one is walking along the street or attending a special engagement, the wearer soon becomes the center of attraction to the general publics. The timeless beauty and quality of the fabric is apparent to anyone with or without knowledge of textiles design.

2.2. African Clothing and Designs

Traditional African cloth may feature bright colours and geometric patterns. There is also cloth which is colored using traditional Indigo dye and created using delicate floral patterns. Traditional African Fabric was always hand-made and many cultures are still producing African fabrics by passing down techniques, patterns and colors that date back thousands of years. Some of these may have changed after exposure to other cultures. Often, men would do the weaving and women would be responsible for spinning and dyeing the thread. Tradition also dictated that the different stages of fabric making had different spiritual or religious significance.

Aremu (2002), tried to fill gaps in existing literature on Yoruba cloth weaving traditions by acknowledging Yoruba women as professional weavers on the broad loom. The actual manufacturing of the products is done by using a wax-resistant dyeing technique on the fabric. Hot wax is used to draw the design on the material, which is then dipped in dye and does not penetrate the material. They are not only well-designed, but are magnificent in color. These are so outstanding that one has only to view someone wearing one of these items to immediately know it is made of Dutch Wax Fabrics. An African dress from this material, called African Print, is in great demand and worn by

those on the higher end of the society. The bold pattern, together with strikingly bright colors, immediately catches the eye of viewers. Garments made from this material are creations of beauty that make a lasting impression on the viewer. Whether you want to find clothing for everyday wear or you are looking at putting together an outfit for an important occasion such as a wedding, learning about this particular style of dress and where to purchase authentic clothing items is important. No experience in the day to day living practices is complete without the blessings of African Jewelry. Jewelry was a way to project a positive attitude toward the creator and the life you live. Most often it was a direct representation of their religious beliefs and the prophets of spiritualism. There are several different types of African Fabric that is used to make African clothing. One of the most common African Fabrics used to make traditional clothing is Aso-oke fabric. This is hand loomed and may have beautiful geometric patterns worked into the fabric. Throughout Africa there is a continuing trend for locally woven traditional fabrics to be supervised by modern factory made cloth preferred for its bright colours, wash ability and ease of tailoring into western style. Gillow (2001)

Because it is hand loomed there are often variations in the patterns and no two pieces of fabric will be exactly alike. Other well-known kinds of cloth include Kente cloth and Kitenge. There are others which people may be familiar with depending on where in Africa they come from. If you are getting married and are a woman, you may want to look at one of the African Wedding Dresses, the Ariya, a four piece outfit that is flowing and beautiful. Men can find special African wedding clothes as well. One traditional men's wedding outfit is the Agbada. It is also very comfortable and is made up of a very long shirt, trousers and a robe which is worn over the shirt.

This outfit is finished off with a hat or head covering. Again, African Outfits are available in Aso-oke or other traditional African textiles and are available in a wide variety of colours and patterns. You may also be interested in finding ways to combine traditional African clothing pieces with Western style clothes. You may want to think about having a shirt or a jacket made out of traditional fabrics that can look great when worn with Western style trousers or skirts. A head wrapping is also a fantastic way to pay tribute to tradition. See Plates bellow.



Plates 1,2 and 3: shows how Ankara fabrics has been turn to different uses of gowns, trousers, skirts and caps with the new trends in fashion.

Source; www.google.com year:2021



Plate 4, 5 and 6: the Ankara fabrics have been used to sew bags, making of shoes and umbrellas for domestic use.

Source: www.google.com. Year:2021

2.3. African Clothes:

Many people look at an outfit of traditional African clothes and may not realize the cultural importance that they have. There is a lot of history that is woven into garments made of traditional African textiles and the styles reflect thousands of years of cultural changes and the influence that other cultures have had on many different African tribes throughout the continent.

Many people have seen the cloth that African clothes are made of. Traditionally, the fabric is usually very brightly coloured and is a form of wearable art. The patterns and colors vary from one region to another and the techniques for spinning thread and weaving the fabric are handed down from generation to generation. Often women would be responsible for spinning thread and in many cultures it was actually the men that did the weaving of the

fabric. African clothes are usually loose fitting and very comfortable. An outfit may vary from region to region. In some areas, a long robe or dress may be worn by both men and women. They may also be influenced by the cultures from other countries which surround an area where a piece of clothing comes from. Full African outfits normally also include a head wrap or hat that varies from region to region. If you are interested in purchasing African clothes, there are a number of different websites and stores that you can shop in. Online stores can be good because you have a larger selection of clothing patterns, styles and colors to choose from. You should decide whether you want to choose an outfit because of your own cultural heritage or whether you want to pick based on a style that you like.

2.4. African Dress:

African Dress is clothing created by the African people who honor through celebration and grief. Ceremonies are the back bone of African traditions and the people live their lives by them. Ceremonies have interactions with dance, chanting, storytelling and a number of other activities to bond the people. They are honoring their history and a future that holds promise in harmony. See. Plates bellow

At the beginning stages of their evolution of clothing the Africans looked to the natural elements of their land. Their clothing primarily came from the food they ate. Nothing was left to waste and waste was deemed a curse to their creator. They utilized every piece of what they acquired and came to develop a quick understanding of how to define the multiple uses each item. Eco friendly materials like bark and others plants were their first experience with the concept of material. However, the raw form proved to be too hard and needed to be pounded to make it flexible and pliable. Ceremonies are a time to connect with the spirit of life and ancestors through offerings. Some of those offerings are things like dance, chanting and storytelling. In short the offering is the unity of a people sharing life the same breathe. Other reasons to celebrate are weddings, new births and rites of passage; symbolizing the closing of one chapter and a beginning of another. The leader of a tribe is expected to present a position of authority and wealth. While custom suits are appropriate costumes for some; the appropriate appeal within African tribes is a massive headdress adorned with feathers and shells or a crown. The rest of the attire would be vibrant and shocking. A spear and a shield are like pieces of jewelry used to solidify the attire. It is common place for African to incorporate jewelry into their daily dress. Jewelry represents their religious belief system or their connection to the spiritual realm. Feathers, shells and cloth are crafted into pieces of jewelry. It is an unspoken expectation and allows for an informal introduction into the lives of the people that surround you. African infused clothing is a worldwide phenomenon that can be found in a variety of places within the world. Its universal appeal has made its way into main stream society and can be experienced in the design concepts of the most famous designers. Run way models appear to be happy to embrace the vibrancy of its signature appeal. Pop culture, traditional and a number of other fashion genres welcome the worldly appeal offered by the efforts of the African culture.



Plates 7,8 and 9: shows how Ankara fabrics has been used to sew Agbada and buba, gown missed with synthetic fibre and also the use Ankara fabric to tie head gears with the different styles with new trends in fashion.

Source: www.google.com year: 2021



Plates 10 and 12: shows how Ankara fabrics have been mixed with synthetics materials to sew t-shirts of different styles and gown.

Source: www.google.com year: 2021



3. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS:

The textile and garment industry has long featured a tug-of-war between traders and manufacturers. When domestic production was booming, the two sides were in a symbiotic relationship, but as soon as Nigerian-made fabrics became less competitive, traders switched to the cheaper imports. And they cannot be faulted for this. Few savvy businessmen would choose patriotism over profitability, and the ankara from China is cheaper and guarantees a higher mark-up. On the other hand, manufacturer associations and textile worker unions continue to push for protective measures to protect their livelihoods from external competition. The recent ankara fashion revolution has introduced a new player onto the scene – Nigerian fashion designers. They welcome the removal of the ban as it gives them easier access to a wider variety of prints for the creation of new pieces. This could also boost the growth of the ankara ready-to-wear sector because designers can take advantage of cheaper avenues abroad to produce their designs for bulk domestic and international sale. The previous import restrictions presented the possibility that if these garments were made in other countries, there would be several hurdles to cross when trying to bring them back into the country.

AFRICAN PRINT FABRICS AND THEIR NUMEROUS USES

- **Multiple uses:** There is wide variety of decoration items made with this fabric that are meant to unleash the beauty of your space. You can décor every room of your home with variety of hangings, table runners, bed sheets, curtains, cushions, mattress and many more. As emanations of particular culture and tradition this fabric brings in peace and warmth to the room. Many of the items made with this fabric are able to resemble your love for authenticity.
- **Special Printing method:** Unlike other printing methods used in case of regular textiles, the African print fabrics are made with special dyeing technique that not only beautifies the piece of cloth but also ensures perfection. The dye sublimation used in printing on this fabric leaves no traces of imperfections.
- **Durable and Economical:** This fabric has very long life and is assured of higher quality. The cost of any item made with this fabric is affordable to all sections of the society. The affordability with quality is the USP (unique selling proposition) of this fabric.

Apart from the above mentioned advantages, the African fabrics are well known for their suitability to any culture. They are easily adoptable by any country as they can embed multiple cultures in their patterns. Now, as we know what are African print fabric and its wide array of uses, let's look at few authentic prints available:

- **African wax prints:** These are the most common printed fabrics available in different patterns and in variety of designs. Each design or print has been attached with a meaning in African local language and symbols emanate proverbs that are famous among local Africans. Hitarget wax printing fabric is the top most famous fabric among African print fabrics. As its name implies the dresses made with it are known for their high quality and long durability.
- **Batik prints:** These are the second most desirable fabrics in many national and international markets of Africa and are known for their colorful imprints. This cloth is either sold in full piece or half piece depending on the customer's orders. The machines used in wax block printing made African fabrics more economical and indigenous. Despite the imperfections at the beginning of this technique batik printing has got international popularity for its supreme quality over other forms of printing.
- **Wax Block prints:** Under this design the fabric receives its share of beautification by wooden or metal blocks applied on the fabric. The blocks are pre-designed and tested and are immersed in colored wax before imprinting on the fabric. This method of printing is easier among all other types of printing and can be altered depending on the country of sale.
- **Spandex African prints:** This is the conventional fabric made with a material that is stretchable and is recommended highly for regular use. The spandex is a material that is elastic like rubber and interwoven of this material with any other material brings flexibility to apparels. This fabric is good for swim ware, sports and costumes as such events need flexible clothing.
- **African George Lace:** Apart from materials and unstitched or semi-stitched cloth, African lace is also world famous for its pretty design and colorful patterns. These laces come in different patterns and in colors along with blouse pieces that add grace to your sari or half sari.

The designs and patterns of African print fabric are unique combinations of perfection and authenticity. The right choice of color, design and printing gives you an aesthetic look and styles your ward robe with conventional collections. For those who are wishing to transform their look African print fabric is a variety that gives you wide choices within your range. There are many online platforms through which you can order a piece from anywhere around the world. The array of choices both in western and traditional ware attracted many eyebrows and are on the expedition of attracting many more.



4. METHODOLOGY:

The study used triangulation of qualitative and quantitative research methods to assess consumer needs and preference for African prints. This will involve the use of questionnaire and observation to come out with conclusive evidence to help in the assessment of consumer needs. This was done by designing questionnaire and observational checklists for the consumers and retailers of African prints to know the marketability and increase in production sales. One hundred and fifty (150) copies of questionnaire were used to sample the opinion of the target market in Oshodi and idumota market, in Lagos, Nigeria. The aim of the questionnaire was to ascertain how consumers perceived the increase in purchase of African prints, the cultural significance that was associated with it, the messages that are conveyed with the fabrics, the price and colours used and the market for the product. The research was conducted in markets where African Wax Prints are mostly sold to find out the opinions of respondents about the African print, the number of metres/ yardages that were sewn, the choice of consumers, colour preference, motifs and their arrangements, the market for the prints and how advertisement influenced the sale of the prints. The simple random sampling technique was in this regard to administer copies of the questionnaire to respondents from different ethnicities in the country to obtain good and accurate results.

5. ANALYSIS AND RESULTS:

Using the descriptive analysis approach, the findings obtained from the questionnaire and observation were collated, synthesized and analysed using figures, charts, and tables as presented in the following sections of the paper. Categorization of the age groups of respondents Out of the 150 copies of questionnaire sent out, 125 representing 83.4% were retrieved from consumers with varied age group.

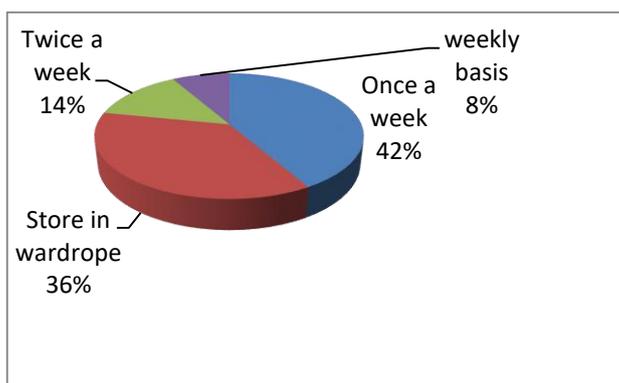
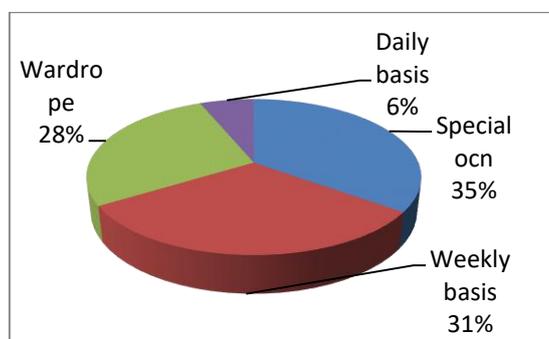


Chart 1 : Categorization of the age groups of respondents

Chart 2: shows the categorization of the various age groups who answered the questionnaire. It must be noted here that, the study focuses on the youth between the ages of 18-35 due to their characteristically unique traits and perception towards African prints.



The study also revealed that, all the 125 respondents owned at least one printed fabric and were able to identify African prints by the designs and the arrangements and their perception towards the pattern, textures and motifs on the fabric, the textures. With regard to how often the respondents wear printed cloth, varied opinions were given as shown in Fig. 2. Evidently, 65% of the respondents wore prints on special occasion, 28% wear it once a week, 25% stored their prints in their wardrobe, 22% used the print twice a week, with very insignificant number of 5% using the print daily.



6. RECOMMENDATIONS:

I would like to recommend the use of African fabric on daily basis because it is attractive and free in on the body unlike the usual corporate wears. Also undergraduate should promote the use of African fabric because even the foreign star like Beyonce, Alicia-keys, Fergie, Kelis still uses ankara for their videos. The use of African fabric should be promoted, starting from the undergraduate. It is advised that students should experiment various methods with printing techniques which would be useful for interior decorations and fashion trends. Also, the recognition of traditional motifs would help to increase the knowledge of representation of virtues in a cultural manner.

7. CONCLUSION:

The result of the findings shows that most people do appreciate the use of African fabrics instead of foreign fabric. They believe that garment made with African fabric can be used on a daily basis. They do not believe in wearing foreign fabric to a night party. They so much believe in wearing Ankara suit made from African print fabric instead of foreign fabric to an interview. They also prefer printed fabric because they think they can only get the best of their garment beauty from it. The study finds that consumer preference for the prints have changed significantly due to dynamism in today's fashion trend and needs of consumers. Factors such as brand and quality, colour scheme, pattern size and layout, symbolism and cultural significance and adaptability of the print designs to different fashion styles, are the main driving forces that influence consumers to choose a print for specific need. It is recommended therefore that textile and fashion designers make concerted efforts to consider these factors as very expedient in their design process so as to satisfy the needs of their consumers to promote the prints both locally and internationally.

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