



THE USAGE AND SALE OF SECOND HAND CLOTHING AMONG NIGERIAN HOUSEHOLDS: A CASE STUDY ENUGU STATE

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the sales and usage of secondhand clothing in Enugu north local government area of Enugu State. Sales and usage of secondhand clothing is a major occupation, for which, Igbo people are famous. With the economic downturn, more Igbo people have taken to the sales of secondhand clothing. Today, sales of secondhand clothing are no longer exclusive Igbo affairs. Government policy has caused inflation, which has in turn, deprived people employment and even choices in terms of wears. As a result, patronage of used clothes that was a character of the low income earner, and people with no or low education, has become an attraction to educated folks as well as medium income earners. Market liberalization which allowed for the importation of goods at reduced costs into Nigeria provided opportunity for Secondhand Clothing Trade to expand. Thus because locally manufactured garments are retailed expensively, these apparel have become highly marketable and affordable to consumerst. Data were collected from a random sample of 220 second hand apparel traders drawn from five market centers in Enugu. The study revealed that having startup capital and providing high quality merchandise to consumers were major motivating factors to respondents that ventured into this business. Therefore, the study recommends that local apparel traders adopt these factors, to increase their business viability and success.

Keyword: Second-hand, Sale, Nigeria, Usage

INTRODUCTION

The sales and usage of second hand clothing has been a contemporary issue in Nigeria which cannot be overemphasized. Secondhand clothing (SHC) traces their origin from wealthy westerners who contribute their obsolete clothing as donations to charity organizations (Dougherty, 2004; Slotterback, 2007). Larger charities first sort through the donations to add to their stock stores and then sell the surplus to secondhand clothing dealers to help generate funds towards assistance programs. Slotterback (2007) reported that about 80% of the donated

clothing is usually sold to secondhand clothing merchants. The merchants sort the secondhand clothing by condition and then categorize in groups which they bundle in bales whose prices vary according to quality of the contents. Clothing merchants from the importing countries visit the offices of exporters to ascertain the quality, negotiate the price, pay for the bales and then ship the clothing to the country of origin (Olumide, 2011). It has been observed presently that Nigeria and Kenya is one of the largest importers of secondhand clothing (locally referred to as 'Okirika, Bendor boutique and Tokunbo while Kenya called it "Mitumba' meaning 'onslaught') in Sub Sahara Africa respectively.

Buying behaviour according to Dawson et al (2006), are set of attitudes that characterize the patterns of consumers' choices. Apart from the essential internal factors, which are recognized as influential to buying behaviour, there are a number of external situational contexts that affect consumer choices. Consumer behaviour is a combination of customers' buying consciousness and external incentives which are likely to result in behaviour remodeling. The society's culture such as norms, philosophies, settlement, customs religion, festivity, class, lifestyle and other subculture influence how individual consumers buy and use secondhand products, and help explain how groups of consumers behave. There has been a current need for individuals and families to develop sustainable ways of living. One of the important areas of sustainable living is through maintainable clothing and textile consumption. Maintainable consumption is using resources in a way that minimizes harm to the environment, while supporting the well-being of people (OECD, 2008). Maintainable clothing or fashion consumption is the use of clothing for purposes beyond utilitarian needs which is achieved while enabling the future generations to meet their needs (Nordic Initiatives, Clean and Ethical (NICE, 2012). Secondhand Clothing trade (SHCT) represents an insignificant proportion of the total global trade in clothing (0.5%), more than 30% of the imports goes to the Sub Sahara African (SSA) countries (Baden & Barber, 2005). Despite being overtaken by imports from Asia to Africa, the use of Secondhand Clothing still significant.

According to Mangieri (2006) and Slotterback (2007) opined that having increased drastically since 1990 the global Secondhand Clothing trade (SHCT) is worth more than USD 200 billion each year with almost all countries in the world becoming involved in it either as exporters, processors, re exporters or importers. Used clothing markets exist in over 100 countries globally (Slotterback, 2007). The United States, the Netherlands and Japan participate in SHCT as major exporters while the developing countries like Nigeria are the major importers and consumers of Secondhand clothing (Baden and Barber, 2005).

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

The economic downturn of the past has affected nearly every segment of the Nigeria economy of the past has affected nearly every segment of the Nigeria economy. The sales and usage of secondhand clothing is one of the business, people are engaging themselves with and its increasingly gaining ground in Nigeria. The rapid increase of population unemployment is one of the major factors pushing many individuals to sell and buy secondhand clothing, all over the world.

Nigeria as a country is posed with a lot of problems, which includes poverty, unemployment, lack of resources, and low wage income are making individuals sell and use secondhand clothing.

Typically, the importation of used clothes would result in a downward shift of the demand curve in the new apparel industry. According to studies (Slotterback 2007) many reasons accounts for the sales and usage of secondhand clothing-

1. Unemployment among individuals.
2. Poverty, both relative and absolute poverty.
3. Low wage income and lack of better job opportunities.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In this study, an attempt was made to provide answers to the following questions?

- I. What are the benefits of secondhand clothing trade?
- II. What are the strategic business practices used by second-hand clothes traders?
- III. What are the lessons to be learned by Nigerian textile and clothing industry?

OBJECTIVES OF STUDY

The main objective of this study is to investigate social construction of sales and usage of second-hand clothing in Enugu North local government area of Enugu State. This is however divided into the following sub objectives;

- i. To know Benefits of Secondhand Clothing Trade?
- ii. To ascertain the Strategic Business Practices Used by Second-Hand Clothes Traders?
- iii. To examine Lessons to be learned by Nigerian Textile and Clothing Industry?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

Data were collected using an interview schedule consisting of both open-ended and closed questions that addressed the various socio-economic factors of the apparel traders and details about their individual businesses and merchandising techniques.

Population

The target population of this study comprised the traders of the secondary shops in Enugu State.

Sample and Sampling Technique

Out of the whole shops in various major markets. Four hundred and twenty traders from the 36 selected shops were sampled; the stratified sampling technique was used in the selection of the ten shops out of the lots in the local government area, while the simple sampling techniques was utilized to select 220 traders each from the ten secondary shops amounting to the total of 220 traders. The shops selected for the study were from:

- a. Ogbete Market
- b. New Market
- c. Afia Nine Market
- d. Artisan Market
- e. Ama Awusa Market

Research Instrument

The major instrument used for this study was the interview, which was constructed in order to conform to the proposed hypotheses raised for this study. The interview was formulated to extract information from the traders about their sales.

Validity of Instrument

After constructing the research interview guide, the researchers study it and make necessary correction that was discovered. The interview guide was then submitted to the project supervisor who critically examined the instrument and make necessary correction before it was typed and administered to trader sample for the study in the local government area.

Reliability of the Instrument

The reliability was tested for by using the test - re-test technique to determine the reliability co-efficient. The test was administered twice to two pilot groups of traders and their responses were correlated and the resultant co-efficient was found to be 0.84 which is an indication of a good and reliable instrument.

Method of Data Collection

The researcher was personally involved in the distribution of the interview. The investigator requested the respond honestly since their response would be treated with utmost confidentiality.

Method of Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS®). Frequencies and percentage tables were used to present the results while pie- charts and models were used to describe the nature of the respondents and their businesses as well as elaborate findings from the interviews and explain unexpected phenomena

RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS

Socio-economic Characteristics of Nigerian Secondhand Clothes traders

The survey revealed that 82.3 % had completed secondary school, 65 % owned their business thus made their own business decisions and 76 % bought their merchandise from Dubai, Europe and USA as this is what their customers preferred. These were significant in determining their business success since the liberalized market demanded a special cadre of entrepreneurs with a knack for new ideas and information regarding markets; sourcing of raw materials and finance (Kinyanjui & McCormick, 2003).

The sellers of secondhand clothing have been noted to be people from low-income households especially in rural areas. Studies in Zambia and Zimbabwe have confirmed this to be the case (Rono, 1998). Also, these people would have otherwise resorted to other low profit activities like vegetable selling. Nigeria's case is different as most 'mitumba' sellers may not necessarily be classified as low-income earners because they appear to earn clearly good incomes. Findings from Rwanda show that self-employment earnings in used clothing retailing exceed those of tailoring by 10-50 percent. Similarly, apparel traders in Lagos earn 2.5 times more than an ordinary casual laborer (CBS, 1995).

General Structure of Second-hand Clothes Market in Nigeria

The study highlighted Nigeria's commercial secondhand clothes market structure comprises of the following categories of traders;

- i) Major Wholesalers/Importers: These traders are involved in purchasing and shipping merchandise from Europe and USA. They buy merchandise in tones then store in warehouses mostly at the point of entry. There are between 60-80 SHC importers in Nigeria, majority of them concentrated around Mombasa port and Lagos's industrial area and the periphery of the Central Business District (CBD) close to Gikomba market which is the largest informal market in Nigeria and the biggest SHC exchange in East Africa (Fields, 2011).
- ii) Medium Wholesalers: These traders purchase the merchandise from importers and sell directly to the retailers. They travel a lot selling merchandise in different towns. Medium wholesalers are mostly controlled by market days in respective towns when large amounts of sales are achieved. At the periphery of the CBD, are at least 100-150

medium wholesalers of SHC who supply their bales to 1000-1500 retailers within the market.

- iii) **Medium/Ordinary Retailers:** These traders buy merchandise in bales from the wholesalers to sell to customers in designated business premises. They may specialize in selling specific merchandise e.g. lingerie/ nightwear, women's wear, children's wear, accessories etc. These traders were common in all the markets sometimes travelling to sell at other markets on market days.
- iv) **Small Retailers:** These traders cannot afford to buy merchandise in bales thus select a few pieces from the medium retailers to sell. They rarely have permanent business premises but prefer walking or stationing themselves along town streets in an attempt to attract the attention of customers.

Generally, the secondhand clothes reach Nigeria through two channels: the imported bales from Europe and USA by private wholesalers and the informal cross-border trade with Tanzania and to a lesser extent, Uganda.

Strategic Business Practices Used by Second-Hand Clothes Traders

From the survey, most SCHAT specialized in particular types of clothing such as ladies suits, children's wear, lingerie/ nightwear, underwear or opted to sell a variety of clothes. Perhaps the traders believed that either strategy would assure them of getting their targeted clientele hence increase sales. Additionally, there existed some kind of networking between the secondhand clothes traders and the dry cleaning industry. The traders would have the drycleaners do any repairs, cleaning and ironing on their behalf at a fee. Rono (1998) noted that these laundry services would improve the quality, price and appearance of the products on offer. Notably, the SCHAT shouted out the prices of the common clothes they had to sell at their business premises or beckoned consumers passing by to visit their business premises as a marketing strategy to try and sell their merchandise. All the traders made use of a variety of visual merchandising techniques to attract customers since these techniques were important in turning a customer's browsing into purchase of an item. The techniques included displaying merchandise by hanging on the walls, on counters, on the doors and windows for those businesses that had some window space. Most traders had future plans for their businesses such as diversifying products, opening their own businesses for those employed, increasing stock, advertising etc. All this was to increase sales and sustain the business. In assessing the apparel traders' attitudes towards their businesses, 94% said they enjoyed their occupation as it was mainly a source of income which points to the 'profit motive' as the ultimate goal in business (Dickerson & Jarnow, 1997). These strategic practices point to the need that apparel traders attached great value to their business' ventures and made a visible effort to sustain it.

Benefits of Secondhand Clothing Trade

The respondents reported that the SHCT is a good training ground for business-in terms of learning marketing skills, direct sales and keeping financial records. Therefore, even if the trade stopped altogether, the traders would still survive by transferring the skills they have learnt to setting up other businesses. Similar sentiments are expressed by Fields (2011). On observation, the SHCT has also increased opportunities for women to earn a living considering that 57% of the respondents were women. Women in SSA (both within male and female-headed households) are more vulnerable to poverty than their male counterparts. Therefore, faced with the increasing cost of living, falling real wages, and rising unemployment, many Nigerians have found an alternative solution in selling clothing to generate a livelihood or diversify household incomes as well as providing jobs and income to informal traders (Fields, 2011; Slotterback, 2007).

SHCT has increased accessibility and affordability of clothing to consumers (Mangieri, 2006; Slotterback, 2007). Studies have shown that by mid 1990s SHC accounted for 50% of the local textile market locally produced clothing accounting for 30% and new imported 20%. Over half of Nigeria's population live below the poverty line, with 56% subsisting on less than US\$ 1 per day (Fields, 2011) Most Nigerians cannot afford to buy new clothes sold in shops where prices are comparable to those in Europe and US (Edwinson & Nilson, 2009). For instance while a man's shirt cost N350-400 from a formal retail outlet, a second hand shirt can be purchased at N.50. from a second hand retailer (Fields, 2011). The increased consumer's accessibility to varieties of clothing and license fees payments have earned revenue to the Nigerian government (Baden & Barber, 2005; Fields, 2011). The trade also provide funds for the city/ municipal councils as each legal trader is required to purchase a trading license at a cost of N3100 in Lagos for example (Fields, 2011). There are approximately 25000 SHC traders in Lagos, who in addition to purchasing the trade license also pay a rent on daily or weekly basis to the city council. As the world embraces SHCT, the study revealed that SHC have become recognized as vintage clothing with rich and famous personalities wearing them to glamorous events (Fields, 2011). These clothes have provided consumers with the opportunity to wear designer clothing cheaply, extend the life of useful clothing through reuse while developing their own identity. Regardless of affordability, the SHC offer a wider variety of choice with respect to quality and style of clothing in contrast to the expensive and limited choice available in the new local clothing (Edwinson & Nilson, 2009; Fields, 2011). SHC appeals to low, middle and high income earners, In addition to a wider variety, of choice, Africans not only buy SHC because of poverty, consumers also buy because they want a designer label. SHC have the original design from Europe as most of them still have very good shape proving their high quality (Olumide, 2011).

First and foremost stakeholders must now appreciate that the sole objective of business is the profit margin (Dickerson & Jarnow, 1997). Nigeria's fashion industry should be clear on how much of this profit margin does it want to achieve. This is critical considering that this industry is the second largest employer of mostly women and minority groups (Werbeloff, 1987). The SHCT has also been a source of revenue to the states. Thus, secondhand clothing businesses provide the much needed lessons for the local industry.

Edwinson & Nilson (2009) discuss success factors that are crucial to the success of Nigerian local fashion brands. These factors are evident with SHC in the Nigerian market. The factors are accessibility, credibility, reliability, competence, awareness and likeability. A good location would increase sales, since the Nigerian fashion consumer tend to shop where all goods are located at one area (Edwinson & Nilson, 2009) Nigerian local brands are not easily available as the SHC which are found everywhere and in huge quantities. The SHCT have easily accessed markets both in the urban and rural areas.

Linked to accessibility is affordability. SHC is also relatively cheap which means that consumers can find commodities that they can afford (Baden & Barber, 2005; Mangieri, 2006; Nyangor, 1994; Otieno, 1990). SHC is available at all levels of quality and price for different market status. This is key to the local industry because by varying the quality of fabric, number of sewing processes or selling clothing with slight flaws not acceptable by one social class and at the same time maintain the highest quality standards possible to another the local industry can easily meet the needs of all Nigerians while increasing their sales.

Combined with availability and affordability awareness is also a crucial factor for the success of Local fashion brands (Edwinson & Nilson, 2009). It is observed that customers are not aware of the local brands. They hear of them, appreciate them but don't know where to buy them. There is therefore need for better marketing strategies to increase awareness of local fashion brands among the local consumers (Otiso, 2004; Mager, 2005) The relevant stakeholders in the fashion industry such as the government, training institutions, fashion designer and marketers should network by working together towards developing awareness for local fashions among the consumers. Massive advertising by local producers and traders will inform and assure consumers about the good quality of local merchandise.

Edwinson & Nilson (2009) noted that Nigerian domestic brands have low credibility and this is one of the reasons why the Nigerian consumer does not trust the domestic fashion designs. This is also explains why Nigerians are not willing to pay high prices for the local brands. They demand justification for the high prices for the local fashion brands. Knowledge regarding the consumer's wants and needs is also very important (Edwinson & Nilson, 2009). The local

fashion marketers must do research regarding target customers, suitable price, styles on demand hence produce for all market segments, Reliability is related to quality hence competence of local fashion designers. The local fashion brands as reported by (Edwinson & Nilson, 2009) are unreliable as most of them are unable to deliver quality products at the required time. SHC are of high quality and are always available when required (Baden and barber, 2005) Reliability has been linked to the low quality and low competence level among the local fashion designers (Edwinson & Nilson, 2009; Otiso, 2004; Mager, 2005). Good quality fabric makes a good garment which will maintain stable dimensions throughout its life, will be colorfast and of pleasant feel to the skin (Donnel et al., 2010). The Nigerian textile and clothing industry should provide suitable fabric to generate the aforementioned qualities. Such items will be acceptable to consumers. Good workmanship increases the life of a textile item, enhance its beauty thus sells very well. The local industry should ensure that sewing processes such as stitching, neatening seams, ironing and good fit are well done so that incase a garment is highly priced it is worth its cost. The local industry should also ensure that all complete garments have a care label. Care labels provide vital information regarding the car of a garment so that it is used for as long as possible. Otieno (2002) cited this as a reason for consumer rejection of locally made garments. Once all the high quality standards have been set and achieved then it is the responsibility of the Nigeria Bureau of Standards (KEBS) to carry out strict quality control to ensure that these standards are maintained by producers. It is also noted that there is need for emphasis on development of competent designers by improving both available training equipment and skills (Edwinson & Nilson, 2009). Nigerian government must invest in design schools and the reputation for the profession must receive a high level. Likeability is another attribute of success according to Edwinson & Nilson (2009). The consumers would prefer the local brands to SHC if the local producers would produce what the local consumers liked. On observation; secondhand clothing comes in a variety of very unique designs such that there is the most minimal chance of more than five people wearing the same design. Nyang'or (1994) observed that working women in Lagos did not want to wear similar clothing thus avoided locally made clothes. The consumers are sensitive to variety in styles and demand on updated wardrobe (Edwinson & Nilson, 2009). In addition, the design in question may still vary in other aspects such as color and size just to mention a few. The Nigerian fashion industry should strive to emulate the same so that even mass produced clothing has some meaningful variety. Innovation by the local fashion designer is crucial. In order to establish yourself in the Nigerian fashion market, you need something new and innovative (Edwinson & Nilson, 2009).

From the above discussion, it is evident that affordability, quality, innovation, marketing and competence are major areas that the Nigerian fashion design industry can learn from the SHCT as illustrated in the model below.

CONCLUSION

This paper demonstrates that secondhand clothes traders are amazingly resilient. Though apparel traders had received some formal education, it appeared that their age, position in business and source of merchandise significantly influenced the types of apparel they sold. Knowledge on such issues as selecting merchandise that appealed to clientele, being a good salesperson, using eye-catching visual merchandising techniques to display clothes, planning for the future and enjoying one's occupation was prevalent among the traders. These factors contributed to increased sales.

Secondly, used clothes businesses have sectoral linkages which range from handling, transport, laundry/dry cleaning, repairing (mending) and distribution. These forms of business interactions have inherently indirect linkages to other sectors such as manufacturing. So although it is argued that second-hand clothes businesses do not experience significant growth in terms of employment, in fact there is a higher growth when indirect employment is generated as a result of sectorial linkages with other businesses.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Thus this paper makes the following recommendations to all stakeholders in Nigeria's textile and garment industry;

1. Local fabric/garment producers need to address themselves to the socio-economic factors influencing second-hand clothes traders to prefer these imported items. Attention should be given to the implications on local production and marketing if the local industry is to meet consumer needs satisfactorily.
2. Advertising as a way of informing consumers especially Nigerians on merchandise available from the local industry, its good quality and suitability for use will form a clear link between the industry and consumers since production is of no significance if sales are not being made. The industry should strive to make high domestic sales so that exportation makes a small contribution to business performance. Domestic sales will make local industries almost self reliant.
3. The Nigerian government through the Nigeria Bureau of Standards (KEBS) need to monitor quality of locally produced clothing so that consumers within and without Nigeria are not disappointed.
4. The impact of second-hand clothes businesses on Nigeria's industrialization is not known. There is need for more research to evaluate the impact of this business on the development of Nigeria's textile industry and employment creation. Key questions like; what proportion of income generated by small scale enterprises do second-hand clothes

businesses constitute? Is this business enterprise worthwhile to be allowed to continue in Nigeria considering the current prevailing economic situations.

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