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Acceptability and the use of African fabrics for formal wears among women in tertiary institution, Delta State Nigeria

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Abstract

The study investigated the acceptability and the use of African fabrics for formal wears among women in Tertiary Institutions in Nigeria. Three research questions and one hypothesis guided the study. Descriptive research design was adopted for the study. The population was 3,564 female academic and non-academic staff in tertiary institution and a multi-stage sampling techniques was used where three tertiary institutions were randomly selected. Then purposive sampling technique of 400 female academic and non-academic staff from three tertiary institution was used to select a sample size of 20 respondents comprising three various tertiary institutions. Data was collected with questionnaire and analyzed using mean standard deviation and test at 0.05 level of significance difference. The findings suggest that targeted educational programs and collaborations with fashion designers could enhance the visibility and desirability of African fabrics in formal wear, promoting not only local craftsmanship but also a sense of cultural pride among the youth. This study contributes to the discourse on fashion, identity, and the role of textiles in contemporary Nigerian society, offering recommendations for stakeholders to foster a more inclusive approach to clothing that celebrates African heritage. Based on the findings presented, it can be concluded that there is great acceptance of the use of African fabrics for the production of formal wears among women in Tertiary institutions. The findings showed that majority of academics and non-academic women accepted the use of Africa fabrics for formal wear based on their good design cost effective, uniqueness and the combination of bright colours.

Keywords: Acceptability, Use of African Fabrics, Formal Wear, Tertiary Institutions and women.

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Introduction

African designers have a long history of incorporating European fashion into their attire such as wearing suits, skirts and blouse, trouser and shirts, gown and among others, using English fabrics to sew them. The use of African fabrics have been of considerable research interest because of the exclusive rich designs and motifs of interests used in the construction of fabrics. Adeloye, et al (2022) opined that African fabrics are native fabrics made from textile which are gotten from various locations across the African continent or Africa. In Nigeria, African fabrics are also known as Nigerian fabrics which are used in making a growing number of acceptable fashion items like bags, shoes, dresses and among others.

Acceptability is the characteristic of a thing subject to acceptance for some purpose. African fabric is acceptable if it serves the purpose for which it is provided, Acceptability is an amorphous concept, which is highly subjective and circumstantial. African fabrics may be acceptable to one evaluator and unacceptable to another, or unacceptable for one purpose but acceptable for another. African fabrics may be sufficient to serve a particular purpose but in the subjective view of the decision maker be unacceptable for that purpose. According to Bucyibaruta, et al 2022, acceptability is as ambiguous and troublesome as probability, confirmation, belief, justice, and among others, and assigns two potential meanings to the term with respect to the possible acceptability of hypotheses.

Different styles of these clothing items are utilized in so many areas, occasions and events by both men and women including the working class, either for cultural activities and identities and also for weddings, birthdays and office use. Various garments are sewn using African made fabrics to produce skirts, blouses, suits, trousers and shirts which are commonly used for traditional occasions. Arubayi (2022) opined that with the age of modernization, technological advancement, industrialization and changing societal roles, the pattern and style of dressing have changed. Hence, Africans, particularly Nigerian fashion have evolved into the use of African fabrics that were commonly used for traditional carnival wears, to create modern wears that could be worn to the office.

Style is a term used to describe an individual's choice of expression, reflecting their personality. Taste, on the other hand, is an individual's subjective judgment and desire for certain fashion elements based on their opinions and taste. Therefore, taste is something everyone is born with. It is what you personally find aesthetically pleasing, and how an individual's taste translates, or how it is presented. Roster (2024) sees personal style as one's that reflect sense of self, confidence, interests, and individuality.

Formal wear refers to an official approval of clothing. According to Nainani, (2024), formal wear is a type of dress style that people wear to offices and are known as Western dress code category applicable for the most formal occasions, such as wedding, offices, Easter, Christmas traditions, State dinners and among others. Notably, dressing style is influenced by Western culture, such as Europe, Americans, South Africa, Australia as well as Japan. In Western countries a formal dress code means tail coats for men and evening dresses for women. The most formal dress for women is a full-length ball gown. In 1860s', fashion evolved to gradually introduce the more sportive, shorter suit jackets. This evolved into the semi- formal evening wear black tie from the 1880s' and the informal wear suit accepted by polite society from the 1920s; both men and women put on suit to enhance the aesthetics of their official outings (Appiah, et al 2025).

Women are Adult or young adult female individuals who are enrolled in tertiary institutions and are capable of making decisions regarding their clothing choices, including the use of African fabrics for formal wear. Dress codes in tertiary institutions have been widely discussed as reflections of professionalism, authority, and respectability (Akanwa, 2017). For women, appropriate dressing enhances credibility and confidence in the academic environment. Research indicates that African-fabric formal wear can meet these dress expectations while offering comfort suitable for long working hours (Moyo & Chikomba, 2021). Female academic and administrative staff who adopt African-fabric formal wear often report improved morale and stronger identity alignment.

Formal wear or full dress is the Western dress style utilized for the most formal occasions, such as weddings, christenings, confirmations, funerals, Easter and Christmas traditions, in addition to certain state dinners, audiences, balls, and horse racing events. Generally permitted are other alternatives, which are the most formal versions of ceremonial dresses (including court dresses, diplomatic uniforms and academic dresses), full dress uniforms, religious clothing, national costumes, and most rarely frock coats (which preceded morning coat as default formal day wear 1820s-1920s). In addition, formal wear is often required to be worn with official full size orders and medals. The protocol indicating particularly men's traditional formal wear had remained virtually unchanged since the early 20th century. Despite the decline following the counterculture of the 1960s, it remains observed in formal settings influenced by Western culture: notably around Europe, the Americas, South Africa, Australia, as well as Japan. For women, although fundamental customs for formal ball gowns (and wedding gowns) likewise apply, changes in fashion have been more dynamic. Traditional formal headgear for men is the top hat, and for women picture hats. of a range of interpretations. Shoes for men are dress shoes, dress boots or pumps and for women heeled dress pumps. In western countries, a "formal" or white tie dress code typically means tailcoats for men and evening dresses for women. The most formal dress for women is a full-length ball or evening gown with evening gloves. Some white tie functions also request that the women wear long gloves past the elbow.

Acceptability refers to determining how well an intervention will be received by the target population and the extent to which the new intervention or its component might meet the needs of the

target population and organizational setting (also called adoptability, Green and Kreuter, 1999; Steckler and Linnan 2022). Acceptability is an amorphous concept, being both highly subjective and circumstantial; a thing may be acceptable to one evaluator and unacceptable to another, or unacceptable for one purpose but acceptable for another. Furthermore, acceptability is not necessarily a logical or consistent exercise. A thing may be sufficient to serve a particular purpose but in the subjective view of the decision maker be unacceptable for that purpose. Ajayi, (2023) opined that the concept of acceptability is as ambiguous and troublesome as probability, confirmation, belief, justice. and assigns two potential meanings to the term with respect to the possible acceptability of hypotheses. Acceptability is a fundamental concept in numerous fields, including economics, medicine, linguistics and biometrics.

Africans are very creative and fashionable people, they use African print fabrics to tell stories, poems and traditional African tales. African print fabrics are given specific names depending on the type of design. For instance, designs are given names such as star, net, shell and so on. All these names have their specific meanings. Akinwumi (2018) opined that African print fabrics have exceptional significance as a means of communication and mutual association between individuals and within communities. The motifs and figural compositions used are directly related to historical proverbs and events. They represent a form of storytelling often taking the place of the written word and convey messages of importance for an individual, family, or larger social unit. Akinwumi (2018) stated that the cotton fabric used for African print fabrics are cool and durable and can be worn in various styles. African print fabrics are commonly used as family cloth (aso-ebi) for parties such as weddings, naming, burial ceremonies and other similar African occasions.

Different types of African fabrics have different names depending on their region of origin. The most popular types include kente cloth, mudcloth, and batik. Kente cloth is a brightly colored fabric often used for special occasions.

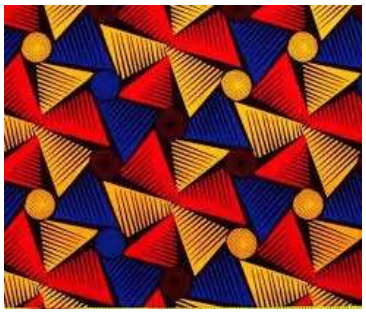


Fig 1. Ankara Fabric



Fig 2. Kente Fabric

In fashion, taste is an individual's subjective judgment and appreciation for certain styles, clothing, and aesthetic elements, reflecting their preferences, understanding, and personality. Adeboye, (2023) stated that taste involves an understanding of what looks good and how different visual elements combine, rather than simply owning expensive items or following trends blindly. Good fashion taste often entails choosing clothes that enhance one's personality, clean, well-fitted, appropriate for the occasion, and coordinated with accessories, all while being mindful of current trends and overall presentation.

A wise consumer should always consider the durability of the clothing selected as well as the care needed to maintain its durability. Garment should be well made, since it is usually subjected to much strain. Arubayi (2019), remarked that although two pieces of garment may look the same, they may differ considerably such that one may last longer than the other. The durability or quality of a garment is judged by; (a) good design, (b) the fabric or materials of which the clothing is made (c) the workmanship and method used in sewing it. To achieve a good design, everything about design in garment such as texture, colour, line, and be appropriate for the figure. In the same vein, for one to be able to make a wise choice from the different fabrics that exist in the market today, the knowledge of fabrics commonly used in clothing, the characteristics and care are vital. Workmanship on the other hand can be judged by inspecting the cutting of the garment and the care that had gone

into sewing and finishing the garment will determine the durability. For instance, the fabric should be cut with "grain", that is straight with lengthwise or crosswise threads.

Style is the unique and a personal way an individual expresses their identity, taste and personality through their aesthetic choices in outfits, accessories and overall appearance. Style is how you can communicate who you are, your interests and your personality to the world, by your choice of clothing, hence wonder Arubayi (2019) points that the style of dressing of an individual depicts their social status and class. There are different styles of formal wears to chose from, making right clothing styles can promote a powerful signal that enhances professionalism and competence and that the use formal wear communicates neat, competent, and disciplined image and signaling reliability to others. Apart from enhancing professionalism and competence, Arubayi, et al (2024) states that the occupation of an individual is one of the determinant of the choice of formal wear, for instance a school administrator may wish to adorn herself in a simple dress suits that depicts formality, thus enhancing self confidence, respect and approval.

Purpose of the Study

The major purpose of this study is to examine the acceptability of African fabrics for garment making among female staff in public tertiary institutions in Delta State. Specifically this study seeks to:

i. Access the level of acceptance in the use of African fabrics for the production of formal wears between Academic and non-academic women in tertiary institutions in Delta State.
ii. Determine the qualities of African fabrics in enhancing the production of formal wears among women in tertiary institutions of Delta State.
iii. Identify suitable garment styles that' enhance the acceptability of the use of African fabrics in the production of formal wears among academic women and non-academic women in tertiary institutions in Delta State.

Research Questions

The following research questions will guide the study:

i. What is the level of acceptance on the use of African fabrics for production of formal wear among academic women and non-academic women in tertiary institutions in Delta State, Nigeria?
ii. What are the qualities of African fabric that enhance the production of formal wears among women in tertiary institutions in Delta State?
iii. What are the different styles of formal wears that can be produced using African fabrics to enhance their acceptability among academic and non-academic women in tertiary institutions in Delta State?

Hypothesis

i. There is no significance difference in the level of acceptance in the use of African fabrics for the production of formal wears between Academic and non-academic women in tertiary institutions in Delta State.

Materials and Method

The study was adopted descriptive and survey research design which is suitable for this study on the acceptability on the African fabrics for the production of formal wears for the dependent variable had already occurred, because it will help to validate the characteristics of the phenomenon (Acceptability and the use of African fabrics) The choice of this design is predicted on the fact, that the researcher will provide information in the current state of acceptability of the use of African fabrics for the production of formal wears. The population of this study comprised of all Academic and Non-Academic staff in five public tertiary institutions in Delta State. The three public tertiary institutions in Delta state which comprised of Academic and Non-Academic staff have a total population of 3564. The summary's population is shown in the table. Purposive sampling technique

was adopted, and a sample size was made up of 400 female Academic and Non-Academic staff of the study will be 400, using multi-stage stratified random sampling procedure.

The instrument used for data collection was a structured questionnaire titled "Acceptability and Use of African Fabrics For Producing Formal Wear for Women In Tertiary Institutions questionnaire" (ATUOA-FFPFWFWITQ) and a hedonic 9 point scale were used to determine the level of acceptability of prototype styles of jobs made from African fabrics.

The questionnaire was made up of two sections. The sections A elicited information on the demographic variables of the staff such as Name of Institution Academic and non-Academic, Gender, Marital Status, Religion, Age, Level of Education among others. Section B had sub sections of A, B, C, D, E, F, & G It is consisted of 86 items meant to solicit response and on the research questions raised. The Academic and Non-Academic staffs are expected to tick the right option that best described their experience on Acceptability and the use of African fabrics in the afore mentioned institutions. Acceptability questions had 10 items rated on a 2 point option of Highly Accepted (HA) =1 and Not Accepted (NA=0). Qualifies of African Fabrics had 27 items rated on a 4-point option strongly agree, (SA) (4) Agree (3), strongly disagree (2), Disagreed (1). High cost of importation of English fabrics had 6 items rated strongly agree, (SA) (4) Agree (A) (3), Strongly Disagree (SD) (2), Disagreed (D) (1). Level of preference on the use of African fabrics had 10 items rated Highly preferred (4), Preferred (3), Not preferred (1), Highly Not Preferred (2), different styles of garment had 10 items rated on 9 point hedonic scale of like extremely (LE) (9) like very much (LVM) (8) like moderately (LM) (7) like slightly (LS) (6) Dislike (D) (5) dislike slightly (DS) (4) dislike moderately (DM) (3) dislike very much (DVM) (2) dislike extremely (DE) (1), problem of the use of African fabrics for formal wears had 10 items rated on 4 points of strongly Agree (4) Agree (3) Strongly Disagree (2) Disagree (1) Durability of African fabrics had 5 items rated on 4 points of Strongly Agreed (4) Agreed (3) Strongly Disagreed (2) Disagreed (1). Strategies that will enhanced the use of African fabrics had 13 items on 4 points of rated Strongly Agreed (4), Agreed (3), Strongly Disagreed (2), Disagreed (1).

Validation of Instrument

The face validity of the instrument was determined by three experts made up of two lecturers in the department of vocational Education (Home economics Unit) and the third one in measurement and Education, Faculty of Education Delta State University, Abraka. For the purpose and the purpose of the evaluation, the experts, examined the questionnaire, research questions, land hypothesis to ensure that it measured what it was supposed to measure. The experts made corrections, recommendations and suggestions were which were appropriate and effected in the final draft of the questionnaire.

Method of Data Collection

The Researcher obtained an approval letter from her department, Vocational Education (Home Economics Units), which she presented to the head of various institutions selected for study in Delta State. This is to enable the researcher obtain an approval to use, academics and non-Academics staff in the three (3) selected institutions for research purpose. The researcher was also assisted by two research assistants who were briefed on how to administer the research instrument to the participants. This enabled the participants to have a clear understanding and filled the right options as it affects them. As soon as they were through with the exercise, the completed questionnaires will be collected immediately. The method of data collection of the study was through both theoretical and Practical. The theoretical aspect was the descriptive study survey method which consists of questionnaires. The practical aspect involves adaptation of pattern block and construction of the formal wear suit using African fabrics.

The suit were made in three different sizes and styles and they includes small, medium and large sizes. These garment will be modelled by three different people to show case their sizes, styles and fittings of the garment and for the participant using the dealer on acceptability, to determine their choices.

Results

Research Question 1: What is the level of acceptance on the use of African fabrics for the production of formal wear among academic women and non-academic women in tertiary institutions in Delta State, Nigeria?

Table 1: Analysis of Frequency, Mean, and Standard Deviation on the Level of Acceptance on the Use of African Fabrics for the Production of Formal Wear Among Academic Women and Non-Academic Women in Tertiary Institutions

S/N	ITEMS	HA	NT	Mean ($\bar{X}$)	SD	Remark
1	African fabrics are properly designed	232	168	1.58	0.494	Highly Accepted
2	They are made of 100% cotton	266	134	1.67	0.473	Highly Accepted
3	I love African fabrics for formal wears because it is unique	234	166	1.58	0.493	Highly Accepted
4	I prefer Ankara fabrics to English fabrics because it is cost effective	240	160	1.60	0.491	Highly Accepted
5	I cherish African fabrics for my formal wears because the fabric designs are attractive	240	160	1.60	0.491	Highly Accepted
6	I love Ankara fabrics for their creative designs	238	162	1.59	0.492	Highly Accepted
7	I love Ankara with wax effects	238	162	1.59	0.492	Highly Accepted
8	I love Ankara with cultural design	240	160	1.60	0.491	Highly Accepted
9	I love Ankara fabrics with combination of bright colors	242	185	1.61	0.489	Highly Accepted
10	I love Ankara fabrics that are Adire	241	159	1.60	0.490	Highly Accepted

Key: HA = Highly Accepted; NT = Not Accepted; SD = Standard Deviation.

From Table 1 above, it shows that all the item 1 to 10 are highly accepted since they had/mean (X) value from 1.50, it therefore means that both academic and non-academic staff women of tertiary institution had high level of acceptance on the use of African fabrics for production of formal wear in Delta State.

Research Question 2: What are the qualities of African fabric that enhance the production of formal wears among women in tertiary institutions in Delta State?

Table 2: The Frequency and Standard Deviation on the Qualities of African Fabric That Enhance the Production of Formal Wears Among Women in Tertiary Institutions

S/N	ITEMS	Agreed	Disagree	Mean ($\bar{X}$)	SD	Remark
11	Good Design	272	128	2.81	1.781	Accept
12	Good Color	356	124	2.35	1.661	Accept
13	Affordable Price	248	152	2.67	1.110	Accept
14	Good quality of fabrics	240	160	2.37	1.110	Reject
15	Good pattern	240	160	2.56	1.201	Accept
16	High cultural symbolism	234	166	1.32	1.203	Reject
17	Very unique	396	133	1.67	1.013	Reject
18	Promote African originality	60	140	1.62	1.142	Reject
19	Simplicity	204	196	2.08	1.230	Reject
20	Good motif	176	224	2.15	1.210	Reject
21	100% cotton	236	164	2.78	1.111	Accept
22	It absorbs heat	200	200	1.65	1.211	Reject
23	Easy to wash	224	176	2.31	1.442	Reject
24	Easy to iron	272	128	1.97	1.321	Reject
25	Very comfortable to wear	44	156	3.13	1.411	Accept
26	Fabric texture is soft	152	148	2.81	1.211	Accept
27	It is very strong and firm	160	240	2.35	1.221	Reject
28	Cool and comfortable to wear	160	240	2.67	0.942	Accept
29	Easy to care for	256	164	2.88	1.210	Accept
30	Not heavy	4	396	2.68	0.892	Accept
31	Not easily destroyed	156	244	3.32	1.881	Accept
32	Soft and moth free	116	284	3.00	0.751	Accept

33	Resistant to heat	340	154	2.23	1.213	Reject
34	It does not shrink	204	196	3.00	0.671	Accept
35	It does not tear easily	176	224	3.34	1.271	Accept
36	It is durable	241	159	2.00	0.932	Reject
37	It does not fray easily	230	170	2.70	1.511	Accept

Key: SD = Standard Deviation.

From Table 2 above shows that, 14 items were accepted while 12 items were rejected since the number of items accepted are more than rejected, it therefore means that all the items in table 2 are the qualities of African fabric that enhance the production of formal wears among women in tertiary institutions in Delta State.

Research Question 3

What are the different styles of formal wears that can be produced using African fabrics to enhance their acceptability among academic and non-academic women in tertiary institutions in Delta State?

Table 3: The Frequency, Mean, and Standard Deviation on Styles of Formal Wears That Can Be Produced Using African Fabrics to Enhance Their Acceptability Among Academic and Non-Academic Women in Tertiary Institutions

S/N	ITEMS	Mean ($\bar{X}$)	SD	Remark
37	Padded suit with shawl lapel collar	6.15	2.619	Accepted
38	Blazer suit collar	6.06	2.436	Accepted
39	Skirt and blouse	6.30	2.236	Accepted
40	Shift dress	6.18	1.751	Accepted
41	Trouser suit	6.04	2.250	Accepted
42	Shift dress (Note: Repeated item in source data)	5.42	2.244	Accepted
43	Dress suit	6.10	2.517	Accepted
44	Padded suit and skirt	5.80	2.641	Accepted
45	Flare suit and shirt	6.82	2.533	Accepted
46	Straight skirt and shirt	5.82	2.768	Accepted

Key: SD = Standard Deviation.

From Table 3 above shows that, all the 10 items were accepted since, it therefore means that all the items in table 5 are the styles of formal wears that can be produced using African fabrics to enhance their acceptability among academic and non-academic women in tertiary institutions.

Discussion of Findings

The finding of the level of acceptance of the use of Africa fabrics for production of formal wear among academic women and non-academic women in tertiary institution in Delta State, Nigeria revealed that there is no significant difference between the level of acceptance in the use of African fabrics for the production of formal wears among women in tertiary institution.

This finding is in line with Ajayi, (2023) who stated that the concept of acceptability is as ambiguous and troublesome as probability, confirmation, belief, justice, and assigns two potential meanings to the term with respect to the possible acceptability of hypotheses. This finding is also supported by Bucyibarata, et al 2022) that acceptability is a fundamental concept in numerous fields, including economics, medicine, linguistics, biometrics and academic and non-academic women in tertiary institutions had high level of acceptance in the use of African fabrics for the production of formal wears.

The second finding of the Quality of African fabric that enhance the production of formal wears among women in tertiary institutions in Delta State indicated that there is no significant difference between the Quality of African fabrics in enhancing the production of formal wears among women in tertiary institution. This finding supports the study of Akinwumi, (2018) that the major characteristics of African print fabric is the creative combination of unique patterns and colours which are displayed in an orderly repetition of motifs which are interrupted by a shift in texture, scale and

direction. This finding is also supported by Uqalo (2015) who highlighted the relevance of patterns and colours used in African print designs, noting that the patterns most times represent proverbs, poems and fables while the colours represent social standing, age, tribal orientation and marital status.

Third finding revealed the different styles of formal wears that can be produced using African fabrics to enhance their acceptability among academic and non-academic women in tertiary institutions in Delta State that there is no significant difference that could be produced to enhance the acceptability of African fabrics in the production of formal wears among the academic and non-academic women in tertiary institution. This supports Arubayi (2019) who pointed that the style of dressing of an individual depicts their social status and that different styles of formal wears could be produced to enhance the acceptability of African fabrics for formal wears. Also, Arubayi further opined that there are different styles of suits to choose from promote, to a powerful signal that enhances professionalism, competence, communicates a neat, competent, disciplined image and signaling reliability to others.

Conclusions

Based on the findings presented, it can be concluded that there is great acceptance of the use of African fabrics for the production of formal wears among women in Tertiary institutions. The findings showed that majority of academics and non-academic women accepted the use of Africa fabrics for formal wear based on their good design cost effective, uniqueness and the combination of bright colours. The study further established the qualities of African fabrics in enhancing the production of formal wears among women in tertiary institutions of Delta State such as taste, colour fastness, durability, fit/comfort, health and safety. However, with the current inflation on importation cost of English fabrics improve the acceptability of the use of African fabrics which are easily accessible and affordable for the production of formal wears.

Recommendations

Based on the above findings the researcher recommended the following;

1. Tertiary institutions should organize fashion exhibitions, seminars, and awareness campaigns to improve the acceptance levels of African fabrics for the production of formal wear.
2. Textile producers should improve finishing, texture, and durability standards of African fabrics to enhance their perceived quality for formal wear production.
3. Policy makers should be developed to implement the strategies to improve the use of African fabrics such as effective trade regulation, pricing strategies and improving the qualities of fabrics produced.
4. Awareness campaign should highlight the use of African fabrics such as good design, durability and color fastness.

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