

EFFECTS OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON INDIGENOUS TEXTILES AND NIGERIAN FASHION INDUSTRY

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Abstract

In the global textile and fashion industries, social media is a platform that is used as a means of networking with people in the industry and to interact with consumers as well as build a presence online. It also affects designers' creations to make them more marketable and appreciable. Many designers in Nigeria utilize social media to create awareness and promotion. Since fashion is dynamic, most of them perceive social media as the easiest means of disseminating information as regards their new designs of constructed apparels in vogue, indigenous woven fabrics, different designs, colours and styles in vogue. Nigeria is a country with a rich, vibrant and colourful textile and fashion history shaped by the culture and social life of the people right from the pre-colonial times till date. Changes have been recorded as regards to the production, innovation, product development, designs on fabrics, styles, merchandizing etc. Using the historical and participant observation research methods, this study examines the influence of social media on designers, individuals, customers, indigenous textiles and fashion in Nigeria. This paper identifies the advantages and the disadvantages of social media on indigenous textiles and fashion before and after. It also reveals some social media platforms that are utilized for showcasing fashion designs and styles. It concludes by revealing that social media is a powerful tool for propagating and circulating fashion ideas, indigenous cloth wears, textile and fashion merchandizers' distribution channels and also as forecaster of fashion in Nigeria.

Key Words: Social media, indigenous textiles, Nigeria, indigenous fashion.

Introduction

Social media has transformed the fashion industry. It has taken communication levels in fashion and textiles to greater heights. It has become a part of people to globally connect with the world in terms of textiles and fashion (Sellors, 2014). To support this, McCarthy (2013) points out that the nature of the world at large as regards to communication in fashion and textiles has been given an entirely new meaning through the use of social media. He further mentions that, social media which was formerly used to maintain contacts with people has gradually progressed to a fundamental aspect of people's lives and the way their business transactions are carried out. He also pronounces that the fashion industry is one specific area of business that has been specifically influenced by social media transformation. Social media has been able to carry the masses along quite unlike before when only the elites (fashion editors, stylists, designers and other fashion insiders) were strictly involved.

This study has observed that Nigeria as a whole is not left out in this wave in recent times. Some decades ago, in the eighteenth century, marketing strategy of fashion and textiles were done by word of mouth and later people started experiencing fashion exposure in runway events, newspapers, magazines and on television; but today social media has tremendously contributed to the way fashion is viewed. During that time, people could hardly have access to different textiles and fashionable styles of clothing without going to where they are produced except the ones they saw some people wearing live. Although there were some designers and fashionable people in those days, their styles did not spread so fast like they do nowadays with the help of social media. There were no sponsored tweets or Google smart adverts that fashion brands of today benefit from. Through these social media tools, those that are interested in fashion designs can easily access any fashion programme on line in minutes. In recent times also, it has been observed in this study that whenever people have an occasion to attend and are looking for styles of clothing to wear, they visit numerous sites and fashion blogs in social media. There one can find numerous fashion icons that load their walls with pictures of different looks of outfits in vogue, fashion dos and don'ts, colours of the season, different outfits for sale, the designer's phone number, website and address. Knowledge of fashion has increased in people today, while perusing social media. Once a person is viewed by the society as a trendy celebrity, his/her clothing ideas are followed on Instagram and twitter (parts of social media) by people for inspiration.

In Nigeria, social media has witnessed the rise and fall of several influencers in fashion; however, there is few that have stood the test of time. The role these fashion influencers play

and exert on online users cannot be underestimated. Whatever they endorse as regards to clothing and fashion could automatically become a trend; they lead while others follow. Fashion influencers are celebrities, business moguls, captains of industries, politicians including presidents and their wives, governors and their wives, senators, members of the house, government officials and other influential people in the society.

It has been observed that almost everyone wants to look good and impressive; people want to become fashion icons or follow some fashion icons on social media so as to be current on trends and know who wore what to which occasion. Who wore it better? The latest asoebi fabrics and styles. However, this study is of the view that fashion blogs in Nigeria are progressing on their platforms because they know what interests people in fashion. Social media has popularized and showcased Nigerian designers, their products and indigenous textiles to the world. Samples of these indigenous textiles have been presented to the world through the use of social media. New designs and ways of purchase are displayed online for accessibility thus, helping to speed up the whole processes of purchase from fashion retailers.

Fashion shows like GTBank fashion weekend, African fashion week, Lagos fashion week, Nigerian fashion week, London fashion week, Paris fashion week Mercedes-Benz fashion week and many others which significantly influence fashion in Nigeria can easily be accessed as live footage on social media. Communication in social media is said to be far more cost effective and time efficient. Fashion and textile designs entail trends, in line with this. Social media enables the retailer to inform the consumer on latest trends and this helps to serve customers better. In essence, social media has a lot of impact on fashion and textile designs which cannot be ignored in Nigerian society today. This paper discusses the various ways in which social media has affected and promoted the indigenous textiles and fashion design in Nigeria.

Social Media

Display of objects, sharing of information, ideas, career interests and other forms of expression through virtual communities and networks are expedited through computer mediated technologies called social media (Obar and Wildman, 2015). They further mention that social media has interactive web, internet web, 2.0 based applications, user-generated contents which include text posts inform of comments, digital photos, live streams, videos and data generated through online interactions used to engage their target market. Wigmore (2015) defines social media as collective online communication channels dedicated to community based input, interaction, content-sharing and collaboration. Wigmore further mentions that social media is becoming an integral part of life online as social websites and applications multiply. Most traditional online media include social components like comment fields for users. In the business world, it is used to market products, promote brands, advertise brands, connect to current customers and foster new business. Social media marketing is used for social networking so as to help a company increase brand exposure and broaden customer reach.

Some of the most popular social networking sites are Facebook, Gab, Google+, Myspace, Instagram, LinkedIn, Imo, Pinterest, Reddit, Baidu Tieba, Snapchat, Tumblr, Twitter, Viber, VK, WeChat, QQ, Skype, Line, Facebook messenger, Sina Weibo, WhatsApp, Internet forums, Podcasts, Web blogging, Wikipedia and YouTube. According to Solo-Anaeto and Babafemi (2015), the total estimated active internet users universally are up to 625 million. Mobile internet users have reached nearly one fifth of all active users. They also state that there are 200 million active users on face book with 100 million users logging in at least once every day in 170 countries or territories in 35 different languages. They further mention that it is estimated that there is an average of 100 friends for every Facebook user. They continued to explain that, social media sites are not paid for; this could explain why there are many users all over the world. All one needs are to buy data and get connected to the internet, register and open to use any social media tool for interaction. Discussed below are some common social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Pinterest, Snapchat and Instagram.

Facebook: Known as the world's largest social network with more than 1.32 Billion monthly active users (Solo-Anaeto and Babafemi, 2015). It is a free social networking website that allows registered users to create personal profiles, add other users as friends, post status updates, send messages, share pictures and videos and communicate with friends, family and colleagues.

Twitter: This is a micro blogging platform that allows users to post tweets with a 140-character limit for their followers to see updates in real time. Twitter members can follow each other and rebroadcast other users' tweets and pictures.

LinkedIn: Designed for professionals with similar areas of interest like fashion professionals. It enables users to inform and communicate with other users. Users normally use this to create professional profiles, post resumes and communicate with other professionals and job seekers. Its goal is to allow registered members to establish and document networks of people they know and connect with professionally.

Pinterest: A social curation website for sharing and categorizing images and pictures found according to individual interests and preferences. When an image is clicked on Pinterest, it normally takes one to the original source of the image. For instance, a picture of a dress might take one to the site where it can be bought. Pinterest allows users to display pictures of items found on the web by pinning them and sharing ideas with others (Christenson, 2013).

Snapchat: An app for mobile devices that allows users to send and share pictures and videos of themselves carrying out their daily activities. It allows users to apply digital filters, frames and special effects to their photo and then share them with followers and on other social networking sites.

Instagram: This is a free photo and video sharing platform that allows users to apply digital filters, frames and special effects to their photo and then share them with followers and on other social networking sites.

Flickr: This is similar to Instagram. It is an image and video hosting website with numerous friends.

Social media technologies also include blogs, business networks, enterprise social networks, forums, micro blogs, photo sharing, products services review, social bookmarking, social gaming, social networks, video sharing and virtual worlds (Aichner & Jacob, 2015).

Social media websites have several million users across the world including fashion industries. While sharing those posts of themselves on their special days, their outlook is one thing people look out for. Users typically access media services through web based technologies on desktops, laptops, tablets, notepads and smart phones. Users normally create highly interactive platforms through which communities, individuals and organizations can share, co-create, discuss and modify both user generated content and pre-made content posted online when engaging with these services (Kietzmann & Kristopher, 2011). Research shows that the users spend 22 percent of their time on social networking sites thus, verifying how social media platforms have become widely known and accepted (Company, 2010) due to the usage of smart phones that are now utilized by people on daily bases. All of these media platforms can be synced to each other so that followers who are not on all media platforms can still see what is happening there for instance Facebook can be synced with Instagram so that a follower on Facebook can see what is on Instagram even if he or she does not use it.

The use of social media in the fashion industry has made it possible for average consumers and regular people to have more interaction with fashion designers, clothing, shoes and accessories. Average consumers and regular people can post their comments online immediately below the fashion company's social media advertisement quite unlike the traditional advertising platforms such as billboard, magazine, and television commercials which the fashion industry and their advertising firm had total control of. McCarthy (2013) mentions that in this way, companies are compelled to respond to the customers complaints because if ignored, the aftermath effect could be disastrous (could go viral) by means of social media. It has brought about new channels of advertising for fashion houses to reach their target markets. In Nigeria, social media is being utilized by fashion brands to engage their target market, report fashion news and events as well as promote and provide customer service to clients.

Fashion and design in Nigeria.

Fashion as defined by Steele and Major (2013), is the style or styles of clothing and accessories worn at any given time by groups of people. They further mention that fashion is used by people as a means of expression and source of identity. In line with the statement above, this study observes that Nigerians utilize fashion to express their cultural identity. Fashion cannot be separated from the daily lives of Nigerians but there are some people that do not accept it, so

as not to be partakers of trends because of their beliefs and personal views. Udeh (2017) reports, that Nigerians witnessed the influx of imported fabrics and clothes mostly from Europe around the 1960s. There are however indigenous Nigerian fabrics which are posing a tough competition to the foreign ones. All these fabrics mentioned above are being used in the Nigerian fashion scene. Udeh further mentions that, clothes amount to nothing until someone lives in them and once someone lives in them it makes a fashion. She also explains that Nigerians take pride in wearing their traditional attires because they are handmade, unique and of international standard. The utilization of indigenous fabrics for producing some items apart from clothes and wearing of these fabrics to different occasions form parts of fashion in Nigeria. Afuwape in Bada (2013) observes that, fashion in Nigeria is an aspect of the culture of a vibrant, passionate and flamboyant people. The Nigerian fashion scene is an outlet or another face of a people that brings out the creative nature and passion of the people who are colourful, expressive, curious, rich and daring. He further points out that, the fullness of this rich culture has been recognized all over the world today due to the vision and innovation of Nigerian designers. And those of them who work and live in the fashion capitals of the world have never forgotten nor shed away from their Nigerian roots. Bada (2013) mentions that designers who are making big impact in fashion capitals abroad, but are based in Nigeria are Deola Sagoe, Tiffany Amber, Maki Oh, Jewel by Lisa, and Frank Oshodi among others.

Fashion Industry

McCarthy (2013) assumes logically that, the fashion industry has come to stay. He points out that there are 7 billion people in the world that are clothed, whether considered fashionable or not. Types of fashion categories in the clothing industries include ready-to-wear, haute-couture and mass market fashion. Clothing will always be a necessity and some demands will always exist. McCarthy defines the fashion industry as a multibillion dollar global enterprise devoted to the business of making and selling clothes. He further says that, many argue that fashion is a luxury and are astonished over its significance. However, he continued, and reports an interview on "The Colbert Report" whereby Anna Wintour, editor in chief of Vogue magazine defended the fashion industry. According to him she says that the scenario could be compared to those that admire a Picasso painting but will never be able to buy one, majority of the people who crave for iconic Channel suits will never get to wear them. Even so, one can still appreciate Picasso's pieces and his priceless contributions to the art world as per cubist movement; one can also admire early designs of Channel and see how themes of women empowerment and activity were manifested in the designs. In essence McCarthy sees Wintours' argument as that which is stressing a deeper appreciation for fashion encompasses an understanding of its trends, influences, messages and history – all the same like fine art and maybe this is what fascinates the buyers.

Elsworth (2009) in Bada (2013) says that, in the fashion industry today, and all over the world, the Nigerian culture is being borrowed and incorporated into styles, signatures and works of partakers of the industry. He also says that the simple wear ability of such materials like Ankara has made the fabric not only a runway creation but an everyday and even red carpet and movie premier wear of choice for Hollywood big names. He further mentions that, these prints are being constructed into not just wears but accessories such as bags, bangles, earrings and other articles of dressing and their uniqueness is in their versatility.

Before kick starting the use of indigenous fabrics in Nigerian fashion, Uduma (2012) reports that, Mrs. Folorunsho Alakija (an exponent of contemporary fashion in Nigeria) tried to meet up with her western counterparts during the Black Expo Exhibition in New York, Washington D.C., Atlanta, Georgia, Mississippi and Maryland in 1993 and 1999 but failed using their own fabrics. He notes, that at both exhibitions Folorunsho tried as much as she could to meet up with her western counterparts but failed. This failure later made her realize that she could not compete with the westerners in their own line and with their own fabrics because they know it better than her. She thought of a substitute. Folorunsho started working with ethnic fabrics that celebrate Africa, capturing and representing the styles, symbols, signs, dreams and aspirations of the people. In designing, she noted that it is necessary to understand that fashion is relevant, relative and dynamic. She observed that it must be relevant to the culture and environment where it is being sold.

Uduma (2012) notes that, the result of her research was the production of designs that were originally African but embraced contemporary realities. In that way, new designs were made without their being wholly African but a blend of western and African designs. He notes that, Folorunsho says that, the designs must be a fusion of African heritage and western designs. He points out that Folorunsho's research is the idea controlling the contemporary fashion scene in Nigeria and through this, Nigerian designers have been able to make impact in the world's fashion scene which are circulated through social media. Since then Admin (2012) observes that, the Nigerian fashion industry has taken a whole new turn, which Ankara fabrics that were used as wrappers by most women have become so popular through the means of social media because fashion designers have brought out the best of them by constructing more fashionable items from them. For instance, Admin (2012) lists some designers like Dakova and Frank Oshodi who have showcased the beauty of Ankara in their designs, the likes of Ituen Bassey, Folake Folarin-Coker (Tiffany Amber), Lanre Da Silva, V-Gold, Lisa Folawiyo (Jewel by Lisa) Data Okorodudu who have also made use of Ankara in their designs, competing among themselves, to drive Nigerian fashion market where it is today, and also show the world that Nigerian designers through social media and fashion shows can make a difference with their indigenous fabrics. This has led to the emergence of new designers who are even better than their mentors but are still upcoming. Admin (2012) further mentions that such designers have succeeded in popularizing the veritable wax which is used to make English and a variety of traditional attires. This study is of the view that this awareness would not have been easy without the help of social media.

Lloyd (2014) points out that, though Nigeria is well known for its oil business, it is currently gaining status as a country with reputable fashion designers. Although the fashion industry is currently facing a lot of challenges, she observes that Nigerian designers have been featured on some of the world's runways and are also gaining strong base with some celebrities worldwide; such like Duro Olowu, Ituen Basi, Deola Sagoe, Tiffany Amber, Lisa Folawiyo (Jewel by Lisa), Amaka Osakwe (Maki Oh) to mention just a few. Also celebrities of Nigerian decent patronize these designers by wearing their designs to various occasions. Designers in Nigeria face a lot of problems amongst which are their inability to find a viable market locally, ability to meet up with the fashion industry internationally, lack of internal and external patronage, lack of formal training facilities, marketing, poor public relations, lack of loans for designers, as well as poor infrastructure and defunct textile markets. Previously, the fashion industry and its potential in Nigeria had not been given its due recognition in that, it lacks the capacity to promote its creative talent and reap its vast rewards. Contrary to other African countries like South Africa and Ghana who generate a lot of income through their fashion industry; Nigeria has a teeming population of 160 million people and known as Africa's most populous nation. It is seen as the centre of African fashion in recent times. Furthermore, Lloyd (2014) indicates that, there are some factors that make it a lively fashion scene; for instance, the increase in urban population and increase in disposable income from an emerging middle class, positive macro- economic growth and a strong appetite for consumer goods. To actualize this, she mentioned the Lagos Fashion and Design Week which was popularized by social media among other media outlets which focuses on highlighting the commercial value of fashion. It also runs a business to series which teaches designers how to raise fund, run business and also trying to place fashion as a lucrative industry.

Much like fashion, social media is another avenue for self-expression. This occurs in the internet. Fashion and social media are linked psychology in various ways. For instance, people dress specially to present themselves to the world similar to the way they may arrange their Facebook page, WhatsApp, Twitter account or Instagram. Added to this is the desire to fit in and be included in the society. Another reason is that, fashion customers want to partake in the latest trend; receive accolades from their peers just like users of social media, want their friends or followers to admire and comment on their posts. Lastly, the thought of appealing to the people is something the two outlets hold in common.

Nigeria is not left out in the use of social media. In the fashion industry, in Nigeria social media has enabled average consumers and regular people to have more interaction than before with the fashion designers, clothing, shoes, jewelry and other accessory firms. Previously, in the

Nigerian, fashion industries advertise through traditional advertising platforms. For instance; billboard adverts, magazine adverts and television commercials which the fashion companies and their advertising agencies completely controlled. But since the era of social media marketing by fashion companies, average consumers and regular people can post online comments immediately beneath advertisement by the fashion company's social media post. The comments could be appreciating their designs, ordering some of their designs, putting forward some suggestions which could help the customer, asking for their prices, circulating the designs among their friends, borrowing design ideas from the designs posted by some designers and also disapproval of some products. This accessibility is possible because there is a rise in the usage of social media in recent times. Social media has introduced new channels of advertising for fashion houses in Nigeria to reach their target markets in the country and across the globe.

Nigerian Indigenous Fabrics

Nigerian indigenous fabrics are conceived and created in Nigeria. They originated, live and belong to Nigeria. They include adire, akwete, ukara, a'nger, aso-oke and akwa ocha to mention but a few. There are also some imported fabrics which Nigerians have adopted as theirs and are now utilized during special occasions for instance laces of various origin, jacquard, African wax prints and other fabrics. These fabrics have become part of dressing for occasions in Nigeria. Some people utilize those fabrics as uniforms for some occasions. The Nigerian clothing styles are undergoing several transformations and some attires have gone far above the rest influencing people's way of dressing. Some of them are hereby discussed in this study.

Aso- oke: It has been observed that the production of this indigenous fabric is a major occupation of the Yoruba, found in south western Nigeria apart from agriculture. It is mainly produced in some towns in Iseyin, Akure, Ibadan and other towns in Yoruba land till date. Previously, the cotton yarn used were hand spun but today different materials have been added to produce the traditional hand woven fabric like silk threads, rayon threads, metallic yarns, embroidery, Swarovski stones and crystals, pearls, beads, painted designs, lace and other trims and so many others. Udeh (2017) is of the view that the surge in the participation of people in the production and selling of indigenous textile (aso-oke) suggests that the industry is making some contributions to the improvement of the lives of the people. She further notes that this indigenous fabric is not only worn by the Yoruba but by almost all ethnic groups found in Nigeria for special occasions. These indigenous fabrics are currently advertised in several social media platforms. Different designs of aso-oke and prices are usually displayed on various sites in social media. The people that are adorned with the fabric are not also left out in that they are also showcased in different walls of social media. Ase-oke comes in different colours and designs. The choice of colours and patterns to be woven depends on what the customer desires. They are mostly used by couples for traditional weddings, group uniforms (asoebi) and by women as headgears.

According to Ezeala (2012), Deola Sagoe was among the very few Nigerian fashion designers to brave the use of Yoruba indigenous fabrics called Aso-oke in her clothing construction. Deola followed the footsteps of Matriarch Sade Thomas John, fashion revolutionary of the 1960s and developed a unique system where the fabric actually looks like it has been embroidered but it's all done on hand looms. She said it has been a personal mission for Sagoe to make the fabric more lustrous and softer as she innovates new production techniques and skills. She further states that in 2011, Arise Magazine celebrated her success by giving Sagoe an award for her lifetime achievement and this was mainly because of her pursuance of the ideology, research and development into the use of Aso-oke fabrics.

Akwete: This is one of the indigenous fabrics in Nigeria. According to Chudi-Duru (2017) in the southeastern part of Nigeria. In *Akwete* town to be specific, in Ndoki and Asa areas of Abia State, women and girls practice the art of cloth weaving known as *Akwete*. Nwachukwu and Oziogu (2012), Goodlife (2010), Powerhouse Museum (2008), also support this and proclaimed that, the Igbo are widely known for *Akwete*-cloth weaving which is basically done by females. They further report that, Igbo legend mentioned that weavers from that village wove in the late nineteenth century and this vocation was passed down from mother to daughter. The woven cloth is usually worn during special traditional events in Igbo land though it is nearly extinct if more attention is not given to it. However, it is still unique and produced till date in Akwete

town. Some samples of this fabric are also placed in the social media. According to Lamb and Holmes (1980), *Akwete* is widely known for its hand woven fabrics which made use of the women's vertical loom. This tradition of cloth weaving is old and respected for its highly supposed excellence that the name of the town "*Akwete*" was given to all textiles produced in that area. The *Akwete* woven fabrics depict prestige because of the symbolic designs woven into them. They are in three main categories namely: George cloth, *Popo* cloth and *Akwete* which were usually tied by the women as two wrappers known as *Eregbor* and *ntukwasi* with a lace blouse and the men tied one wrapper with a jumper shirt. These categories are all known as *Akwete* woven fabrics, and are all distinguished from each other by their woven designs which comprise of various motifs. There is no joining as one could find in *aso-oke* woven fabrics. Davis (1974) states that some *Akwete* weavers claim to know over one hundred motifs which have been combined and woven into the cloth to produce various designs for prestige, beautification, identification, protection, special occasions and special families. Most of these designs are complicated, and each motif used in the design is symbolic and has a story to tell. There are also some modern modifications by some textile designers to ensure its sustainability in Nigerian contemporary fashion (Chudi- Duru, 2017).

Ukara: Udeh (2017) describes the *Ukara* cloth of the Ekpe secret society or cult as a woven material which is dyed indigo blue. The fabrics incorporate signs of the leopard and various motifs from the Nsibidi traditions. They are embroidered into the fabric using raffia onto the white woven cloth and later dyed with indigo by male Nsibidi artists. This cloth and its' samples are posted in the social media. This fabric is a ritual cloth of the Ekpe secret society found mostly among the Efiks of Cross River State, the Oron of Akwa Ibom State, Arochukwu and some other parts of Abia State of Nigeria. It is worn as wrappers during initiations and social events. It distinguishes Ekpe members and serves as backdrops in Ekpe lodges. This cloth showcases the sacredness and prestige of the Ekpe society.

A'nger: The *A'nger* is the Tiv traditional hand woven cloth produced with the male horizontal loom. The Tiv are found in Benue state of Nigeria. This fabric is made up of white and black stripes which are reminiscent of a zebra skin. The fabric colours are based on their beliefs. The fabric is used to identify the Tiv wherever they are. They are usually worn for ceremonies.

Akwa ocha: This study reveals that *Akwa ocha* means white cloth. It is a traditional hand woven fabric that is completely white and sometimes patterned with simple or complicated added weft designs. It is an ancient vocation just like those mentioned above. The vertical loom is used to produce the fabric by not only women like the case of *akwete* weaving. There has been a lot of improvements made to its design in Nigerian fashion.

Adire: These are dyed cloth made by the Yoruba women of south-western Nigeria using a variety of resist techniques in dyeing. Cotton fabrics are usually utilized in the dyeing processes because they have greater absorption rates for dyes.

There are also some other fabrics such as laces, brocade, suede etc. which are foreign that have found their way into Nigerian cultural or traditional fashion. This study observes that such foreign textiles are comfortably fused into the Nigerian fashion. For instance, *danshiki*, *caftans*, skirts and blouses made from laces and other foreign materials and African wax prints are used to construct all manner of clothing apparels which are now part of Nigerian fashion. Nevertheless, in the Nigerian fashion scene, indigenous fabrics are really waxing strong and being patronized by people when they want to look good and fashionable. All these are shared as posts in social media among individuals. Plates 1 and 2 are some indigenous textiles fashion designs used in Nigerian contemporary fashion and circulated in the social media.



Plate 1: Akwete hand woven fabric and velvet George worn with lace blouses by an Igbo woman. Source: pinterest.com (2017)



Plate 2: Otuodu women society of Onitsha (Anambra State) in their full regalia. Source: Ofala festival (2016)



Plate 3: A Yoruba couple. Source: bellanaija.com (2016)



Plate 4: An Igbo couple. Source: dressmeoutlet.com (2017)



Plate 5: A Hausa bride. Source: naija.ng (2017)



Plate 6: An Ibibio lady from fattening room. Source: kwekudee-tripdownmemorylane.co.ke (2017)



Plate 7: An Efik couple. Source: weddingfeerity.com/efik-wedding/



Plate 8: A delta Igbo couple. Source: [pinterest.com](https://www.pinterest.com) (2017)



Plate 9: An Edo bride. Source: bellanaija.com (2013)



Plate 10: Tiv traditional wear. Source:jiji.com (2017)



Plate 11: Ankara fabric designs of Ituen Basi. Source: bellanaija.com (2009)



Plate 12: Ankara skirt and blouse. Source: pinterest.com (2017)



Plate 13: A Hausa bride. Source: pinterest.com (2017)



Plate 14: batik prints by Tiffany Amber. Source: fashionghana.com (2018)

The Role of Social Media in the Sustainability of Indigenous Textiles and Fashion Design in Nigeria

Since social media are primarily internet – based tools for sharing and discussing various information (Fernando, 2012), they are designed specifically for interacting with different kinds of people from diverse background and origin. It has helped African societies to develop, enrich and preserve its own cultural values and ensure that it is conspicuously represented in the emerging global culture. Nigeria has a rich cultural background in indigenous textiles (Solo-Anaeto and Babafemi, 2015). These fabrics from different cultures are decorated with numerous designs and symbols which depict their worldview and cultural heritage. They are worn with pride. According to Akuki (2017), dressing for one's culture gives one a certain pride in the culture of one's people. The designers and producers are always working tirelessly looking for ways to add something new so as to attract more buyers. They are used for different occasions in Nigeria and every now and then newer designs keep on coming up and people crave to purchase some of them. Social media has been of immense help because people use it as a medium to share indigenous dress culture information in form of pictures, videos and write-ups. Places of purchase like Ali Baba Express, Konga and Jumia to mention just a few have sites where one can view different types of Nigerian indigenous fabrics and order thus, sustaining the clothing and fashion industry in Nigeria. There are some other ways in which social media help in the sustainability of indigenous textiles and fashion designs in Nigeria.

There are lots of communication tools in social media which include fashion blogs and websites where individuals or organizations can write articles on trends in fashion and textiles worn during festivities in different parts of the country. One could also find articles filled with pictures of indigenous fabrics found in different parts of the country, where and how to find and buy them, their prices, names, various colours etc. This helps many people to easily locate where they can purchase the fabrics. Visitors to the sites are free to ask questions and comment in Facebook, Twitter or LinkedIn. Pictures of indigenous fashion styles of clothing, videos of fashion show, comments, personal details are shared and also relationships between the

designer and the clients are established. There are also friendships which are established on Facebook known as friends or followers on Twitter, pictures of apparels are also posted and shared for people to see. There are also crowd funding sites such as Kickstarter or Zopa which enable funding for a company business venture or individual business. In these sites various projects investment options and ways of facilitating them are listed.

In textile and fashion education, there are some tools used by many internet users that have communal characteristics. For instance, Wikipedia as a collective tool has been used to enable many people to concurrently update and view online encyclopedia as regards to textile and fashion designs. This encyclopedia has been of help to many textile and fashion students, designers, artists, art historians, fashion journalists, anthropologists and textile/ fashion design researchers in Nigeria. Google docs also allow people to share and edit documents online such as text documents or spread sheets. Dropbox allows people to upload pictures of designs or download files that are large in size from a central folder which many can be accessed from personal devices like desktop, laptops, smart phones and tablets. Quora and Yahoo are other sites that are good sources of information and knowledge. They give room for open ended questions and answers are given by other users in the community. Amazon also makes books available for people either for temporary use or for sale. It allows reviews, comments and ratings by consumers on the product it sells. All information made available by the tools mentioned above are of immense help to researchers.

There are brand monitoring tools which enable the fashion consumers to read and surmise the recent happenings on social media about particular designers, their clothing line numerous designs and models. Brand monitoring tools can also provide answers to consumer's questions, analyse fashion trends, fashion shows and competitors. Notable companies that offer these tools include Brandwatch and Radian6. These enable social media fashion and textile marketers to listen to what people's opinion are on their company and brand online and track who is saying what, whether negative or positive.

Social media in Nigeria has also helped to sustain indigenous clothing wears through the use of video sharing sites such as YouTube. Here users upload and view videos of fashion shows, weddings, different styles of indigenous clothing, different *aso-ebi*, latest wedding gowns and bridal party wears, latest prom gowns, the numerous procedures of dyeing fabrics locally, pattern drafting procedures, tying of different styles of headscarves and so much more. There are some other sites that offer photo sharing services with special features which are utilized in Nigeria to aid the sustainability of fashion designs for example WhatsApp, Picasa and Flickr. In WhatsApp, pictures of fashionable items like clothing can be shared among individuals and group chats. Pinterest is also one of the social bookmarking sites that allows one to share pictures of indigenous African cloth wears for different events and sites they were found on the web with other people. They normally share the trends in women fashion every week as regards to Nigerian fashion styles. This helps some designers and it also serves as sources of inspiration to them and their customers for their designs and creations. Previously these design inspirations were acquired from vacations or visits to fashion capitals of the world but the internet and social media have made it a lot easier and given it a new approach which is cost effective and faster.

Social networking helps small textile and fashion business owners to attract attention to their products and patronage with little or no cost. It also helps some fashion and textile merchants for cheap adverts because social networks are highly effective websites that attract millions of visitors' daily providing adequate exposure for the business. It provides online connection with customers in that they can speak, ask questions, answer questions and discuss with their customers. It allows fashion businesses to interact with people worldwide giving them global exposure. Other types of adverts on television or similar marketing methods on an international scale would costs millions of naira but the same adverts can easily be achieved online at a very cheap rate.

It allows for online meetings for industrial textile and fashion experts to meet and discuss various features of their business. It also allows various textile/ fashion industries and outfits to explore other professionals that could render help in growing their business.

It enables some fashion and textile designers to apply and secure some jobs online.

It improves customers' impression of the business. It creates room for sharing creative ideas on fashion and textile designs. The use of social media for the display of Nigerian styles and dresses has led to the infusion of African prints and fabrics in the designs of foreign clothes designs. Most designers make use of African wax prints to construct fashionable wears which appear on runways and are sold globally. This has helped to some extent to sustain the indigenous Nigerian dress and fashion culture.

It helps the textile and fashion designers to get feedback on new products and services.

It enables some consumers to influence fashion in their own unique way. It allows people to be part of the process of fashion making. They use it for wardrobe advice and latest trends. It acts as a platform for the average person in Nigeria to engage in fashionable ideas. People from homes can interact and engage in fashion shows just like the attendees. Major fashion designers in Nigeria are of the view that profits will be made by reaching customers through the social network, which is more intimate and interactive rather than fashion runways which many might not be able to attend.

It serves as an archive for Nigerian indigenous dress culture and this also helps in its sustenance. Contents on social media are always available at any time of the day all year round and users have the opportunity of viewing what they want on any site at any time. They are stored and could be accessed at any time even for many years to come.

Nigerian indigenous dress culture can be appreciated by creating pages in social media to display them. Through these pages' people from other parts of the world will have the full knowledge of their dress culture and appreciate it. This also helps to keep it alive.

Disadvantages of Social Media Networks in Fashion Design

Social media lacks strict measures that its users have freedom to write and post all sorts of fashionable styles of clothing which might not be morally justified.

Some of the cloth styles posted on social media do not depict decency in fashion and the younger people who make up the largest population of ardent users usually fall prey to such. Some users are almost going nude in their dressing because they are copying a celebrity whom they admire and follow on social media. This study has observed that this affects the society in a negative way.

Some designers tend to be lazy over their own creations. Social media makes it a lot easier for customers to find and choose their own styles of clothing. Some designers easily copy each other's works from the social media.

Conclusion

Social media has greatly contributed to the way majority of Nigerians view fashion. The latest fashion trends are right there in someone's gadget held in his or her palms. Through these gadgets Nigerian fashion has experienced lots of changes because there are numerous fashion icons all over the social media whose pages are filled with pictures of different looks, fashion dos and don'ts, tricks in fashion, latest outfits for sale and colours of the year, websites of the designers, online outlet stores for Nigerian traditional clothes like jumia.com, naijatechguide.com, konga.com, oyoyo.com.ng, obezi.com and many others. During the course of this study, it was discovered that the social media has brought Nigerian fashion designers to limelight globally, created job opportunities, helped people to improve or mar their dress sense and placed Nigerian fashion and textiles on the world map of fashion and textiles designs. The Nigerian fashion industry is becoming indigenous and more and more people patronize the indigenous ready – to- wear clothes through social media. This has decreased the number of times people have to travel abroad for shopping. It also reports that despite the tough competition indigenous fabrics are facing with imported clothes, social media has been able to showcase appropriate indigenous cloth styles and fashion which have held sway in today's fashion scene in Nigeria. Social media has a powerful influence in Nigerian fashion over the years and has come to stay, showcasing new ways of disseminating fashion ideas, news, designs, newer designs of indigenous fabrics which are utilized in fashion every now and then.

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