

Sustainable Economic Development: A Survey of Textile Merchandizing Advertizing in Akure City Markets

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Abstract

Bearing in mind that sustainable economic development will help the growth of a nation, a survey of textile merchandizing activities in Akure markets is chosen as one of the tools to drive the wheels of progress in this direction. Therefore, the paper seeks to highlight the importance of these markets to the economic growth of Akure and environments with a view to sensitize and sustain their purchasing power in using meager available resources to buy good quality fabrics. The sources and destinations of these fabric goods and other relevant but related structures in textile marketing and advertising are discussed in the paper.

Keywords: sustainable economy, textile, merchandizing, advertizing.

Introduction

The use of textile materials as body covering and as utilitarian materials cannot be disputed through the ages. Attempts to define textiles will be repetitions of previous works of scholars who had written extensively on the subject. Although the early popularity of varieties of textile material (fabrics and garments) was noted to have served as trade values for cloth sellers, who chose to serve either as wholesalers or retailers, consumers also find solace on the trade partnership that existed between manufacturers and representatives (Ojo, 2003).

Textile merchandizing and advertising is a relatively new area of study. In a real sense, merchandizing involves buying and selling of goods by individuals or marketing companies, while advertising draws the attention to goods for sale or services to offer. Advertising is encouraged through newspaper advertisements, bill boards, shops, kiosks, complex malls, roadside stores, market stalls and mobile shops.

The paper seeks to reveal some merchandizing and advertising strategies of textile Materials with a view to create awareness for consumers on their market values, location, types and styles. This is intended to promote patronage and entrepreneurial engagements. It is believed that the informed consumer with the basic knowledge of textile products is skillful shopper who can also judge values and quality of fabrics in order to conserve money.

Fabrics that are available and affordable are not easily located in cities where many textile markets exist. This peculiarity alone is sufficient reason to make survey of this type as Akure city is a non-fabric production center. As a non-production city, the area of production to points of sales is one of the reasons for profiteering. The absence of textile warehouses in

Akure as a state capital town also promoted over pricing of goods, since many manufacturers in Lagos and other producing states had played down on the activities of major marketers. (Ojo & Akinrujomu, 2007).

In the late 1970s, major fabric marketers who served as wholesalers to textile industries were issued permit cards (license) to distribute and redistribute within sub-wholesalers and retailers in major cities of Nigeria. Such manufacturer's representatives were the G. B. Ollivant and the Leventis stores who operated under the United African Company (UAC). Major distribution centres were Gbagi market in Ibadan, "Gota" Balogun market in Lagos, Benin market in Edo State and Kano Central markets (Ojo & Akinrujomu, 2007). The lack of these major distribution and re-distribution Organizations has encouraged inefficiency in the marketing network of fabric merchandizing in *Akure* and other cities. This study thus becomes relevant.

Some Issues on Textile Merchandising

Textiles serve the social and cultural needs of the people as they are often referred to as second human basic need next to agriculture (Diogu, 2000 and Onyekezini, 2004). However, it is logical to aggregate the importance of the merchandizing of textile goods to the profile of the people of *Akure* as part of the mainstay of their economic activities.

On the other hand, concerns about the impact and development of full textile markets in *Akure* city was necessitated by the machine textile industries which had multiplied production of fabrics in thousands consumption. The seeming competitive markets and the development of garment styles in vogue are some important factors in the buying and selling business.

Textile merchandising is a dynamic social and economic activity in Nigeria. In many cities of Nigeria, government procedures for quality control of fabrics, environmental impact assessment tax and registrations of market stalls and shops are making the prospects of textile marketing a "no-go" area for businessmen and women. Musa (1994) Ming (1993) and Bamgbola (2009) presented a gory picture of a crippled textile market situation in Nigeria and concluded that political and economic uncertainties have hampered textile merchandising. Added to this is the penetrable nature of guild of cloth sellers which makes fabric sales a "Tom-and-Dick affair. Textile consumer's interest is a major strategy in buying and selling of fabrics. Mbedi (2010) opines that the patronage pattern of African printed fabrics (Ankara) is dictated by its cheaper and varied yards for local and international attractive motifs which are commonly found in our markets. The Nigerian markets here unchecked influx of the milled textile products. At the same time, the Nigeria borders are porous to illegitimate trades in textile business. The "Okrika" or "Bosikona" types of clothing that are sold in our markets are examples of this.

Although the sales of illegitimate foreign fabrics are noticeable in *Akure* markets like all other town and village markets across Nigeria, it has traders who do not have money for Nigerian textile factory fabric bulk purchases. Nevertheless the machine textile industry provides most of the products displayed on *Akure* market stalls (Akinrujomu, 2002).

Organs of Textile Merchandizing and Advertising

Textile merchandizing has been described as a business revolving around and turning around for the benefit of end-users (Kriger, 1993). Kriger (1993) also notes that merchandizing involves various process of planning and executing the concept of price, promotion and distributing ideas, goods and services for a satisfactory exchange between the consumer and the seller.

In the same vein, textile advertising promoted the business initiated by the merchandiser, enlightenment and promotion of goods to a large mass of audience. Fabric retailing is a major activity in *Akure* and other Nigerian markets. As an organ of merchandizing it involves display and presentation of goods in markets. Unlike what obtains in advanced countries, retailing of fabrics is done through specialty stores and mail order houses where pamphlets and catalogues of textile items are produced and sent to customers every manufacturing season. In recent times, the internet is another faster source of retailing and advertising of fabrics.

Textile Merchandizing in *Akure* Markets

There are no noticeable special markets for textile products in *Akure* city, but fabrics are sold in all the markets dotting the geographical areas in the city.

As a non-fabric producing town, the circulation of textile goods is dependent on traders who purchased fabrics from Lagos, Onitsha and Ibadan general markets. Specifically, textile industries in Lagos State are generally patronized for bulk purchases of fabrics by *Akure* cloth traders.

Below is a list of some sources of fabric goods in Lagos and other states:

State	Name of Textile	Location	Year of Established	Product
LAGOS	The Nigeria textile Mill Plc	Oba Akran Avenue, Ikeja	1960	Plain fabric for Ankara yarns printing not involved
	Bhojsons Industries Plc	Ilupeju Industrial Estate	1971	Lace, synthetic Fabrics, yarns (for textile mills)
	Emcast Works Ltd.	11, Ajumobi Olorunoje Crescent, off Acme Road, Agidingbi, Ikeja	1987	Screen printed works.
	United Nigerian Textiles Plc (NICHEMTEX)	Ibeshe Road, Ikorodu.	1971	NCHEMTEX Ankara African Wax Lace Materials
	Atlantic Textile MFG Co. Ltd.	Ilupeju Industrial Estate	1965	Ankara Fabrics
	Woolen and Synthetic Textile Manufacturing Ltd. Afriprint Nigeria	Ikeja Oshodi Apapa	January	Wools Chiffons Afriprint Ankara

	Plc	Expressway	1985	
	Aswani Textile Mill	Aswani, Isolo		Ankara Fabrics
DELTA	Asaba Textile Mill	Asaba	1964	Super Print
KADUNA	United Nigerian Textile Plc	Plot 'O' Industrial Estate	May 1964	Veritable Unit Plc, Wax, Super Print, Classic wax, Diamond wax, Hollander wax
OTHER COUNTRY				
Gahna	Akosombo Textile Limited (ATL)	Volta Region, Akosombo	1964	Ankara fabrics (African Print Fabrics)

Source: Authors fieldwork conducted for proposed Ph.D work (2011)

Suffice it to say that Akure textile merchants serve as middlemen between companies and consumers; the duty of a wholesaler for a smaller city like *Akure* has been eroded. The flow of textile goods from markets in *Idumota, Balogun, Oshodi, Aswani* and *Gota* in *Lagos: Gbagi, Kingsway road* and *Onitsha* constitute major outlets for the manufacturing industries where *Akure* cloth traders do not have due access.

Traders in the above mentioned popular markets also constituted themselves as general wholesaler merchants who assist in the retailing processes. *Akure* fabric market traders are not exceptions. Fabric traders from all over Nigeria converge to do business at any point during the week.

As a profit making business, textile markets in *Akure* also enjoy seasonal sales. Some specific materials such as lace, organza, guinea brocade and others are patronized during Christmas, New year celebration and other notable joyful seasons. African Print Fabrics (*Ankara*) and other cheaper fabric stuffs are not left out as "*Aso-ebi* (a general uniform for identifying with a specific celebration among the family members).

There are also fabrics made in hidden areas of the country which penetrate into The sales of imported textile materials receive special markets without control. Attention from selective buyers with big income earnings. Fabrics such as lace met are bought in small quantities by patrons.

Fieldwork and market surveys reveal that sales of traditional fabrics are net prominent as a very minimal market stalls display fabrics like *Adire, Aso-oke* band woven cloths and other native materials. Factory made imported fabrics like chiffons satins, crepes, silks are exclusive preserves of special stores in *Oja-oba* market in *Akure*. Indeed, there are reports of low patronage of these fabrics.

Many fabric sellers work as retailers and wholesalers thereby eroding the activities of middlemen in the sales process. Interactions with fabric sellers and sellers chairpersons reveal that distribution of fabrics in *Akure* are also encouraged by the co-operative and thrift system whereby registered members are given money on loan to activate fabric trading.

The display pattern of textile materials in *Akure* markets follows the methods in other Nigerian cities except that the *Akure* shops have now worn new looks Due to face- lifting of market stalls by the government of Ondo State. Earlier than now, fabric stalls were subjected to unkempt environment, where buyers and sellers often purchased fabric at the middle of the dual carriage roads along *Oba Adesida*. Other fabric sellers are also found displaying their goods on bare road-space available at the entrances of the markets. As a fabric-consumer city, *Akure* markets attract a larger patronage with varieties of bargaining antics. Such antics as discount pricing and payment on credit terms (which may be short or long term) open another discussions on the desperate nature of fabric buyers.

As fabric consumers enjoy higher incomes, they have also become more fashionable and bound to replace old fabric stuff with new ones. For example, Ankara fabrics life span is short, so a replacement from time to time is often desirable, so the Patronage pattern increases as replacements take place.

Fabric Distribution Network

Fabrics are bought directly as explained earlier in this paper from markets in Familiarity in business circles. It is not a new thing that minor/petty traders will have to neighboring states. Interactions with fabric sellers reveal that not every fabric seller in *Akure* could travel to buy goods for lack of finance. So the distribution network hinges on the financial capability of the retailer. Oftentimes, retailers of fabrics in *Akure* got fabrics from major shop owners on credit basis, resell for their own profits, and then return the cost price to the original owner. The arrangement is often based on trusts and lean on major distributors for their existence.

By this arrangement fabric are distributed without hindrances. The unsuspecting customers purchase fabrics without the detail knowledge of these transactions. Well organized metropolitan markets, trusts are based on legality of the trade. For instance, retailers are registered with permit cards "license" to take credit from wholesalers who represent the manufacturers.

Ojo & Akinrujumu (2007) reveal how wholesalers purchase larger quantity of fabrics from manufacturers or merchandizing stores little capital base. The absence of this legal pattern in *Akure* textile market distribution and re-distribution tend to abuse trusts and retard the flow of distribution networking.

Location of *Akure* city market

A market is a regular gathering place where delivery of goods, exchange offerings (buy and sell) and customer - sellers relationship foster (Easey, 1995). Market creates avenue for the promotion of economic activities among eager and anticipating customers. The sustainable economic development as regards buy and sell is dependent on its market points: In some towns and villages, market days are observed as special days of reaping the gains of labor. This perhaps explains the reason why the convergence of varieties of traders of wider range of goods becomes a recurrent affair in market places.

The city of *Akure* is not an exemption in this regard. As a prominent state capital city of Ondo State located in South-Western Nigeria, many markets for commercial activities are

found in the nooks and crannies of the city. The main market *Oja-Oba* also nicknamed *Erekesan* is located at the centre of the city very close to the *Oba's* palace.

The market was rebuilt by the Agagu administration with textile stores dominating the main entrance. The market houses different textile materials for sale to customers, and extended towards *Arakale* Road on the eastern side. The textile material section dominates the ultra modern market with the services of tailors, seamstresses and embroidery makers. also houses mostly imported textile materials with few local textiles on sale (Now the market is under renovation) NEPA market in Akure is classified as the most expensive and least patronized for clothing materials.

Other lock up shops and open textile stalls that are found around "NEPA" market These special stores which enjoy minimum patronage. probably due to the renovation that has recently taken place. Special stalls are not available for *Aso-Oke* woven fabrics or to her traditional cloths in *Akure* market. Unlike in Ondo and *Owo* towns where special stalls are created for *Ofi* Ondo and other native stuffs, the markets in *Akure* are dominated but imported and machine made fabrics. Fieldwork conducted reveals that the importance of apprenticeship system in the trade of buy and sell of fabrics cannot be over-emphasized. Apprentices learn how merchandizing business goes from day-to-day, apparently graduating to start their own textile shops. This is a multiplying effect of textile merchandizing among Traders in *Akure* city. Pricing and prices of Ankara fabrics in *Akure* markets fluctuate from time to time the table below shows a tentative price list of fabrics as at the time of the field

TENTATIVE PRICES OF ANKARA FABRICS IN AKURE MARKETS

TYPES OF ANKARA	QUANTITY OF FABRICS	RATE
Elegance London Wax	Six yards	3000
Hi-Target bloc	Six yards	2500
Hi-Target Ordinary	Six yards	1500
Veritable Hi track block Wax	Six yards	3500
Java Gold Opulen	Six yards	800
Ghana Wax (Printed Fabric)	Six yards	2, 5000
Wooden Wax	Six yards	7000
Nigeria Wax (Printed Fabric)	Six yards	2200
Hollywood Wax Block	Six yards	1000/1500

Conclusion

Market places act as valuers and "disposing" grounds for locally and imported textile materials. The distribution patterns and networking have become the concerns observers in academics. The paper focuses on *Akure* markets because of the absence of contemporary researches as regards merchandising in the area.

As the textile markets expand, parking spaces and accessibility to market facilities and public transportation becomes very important. Only recently the state government created a mini parking space for motorists traders and buyers in *Erekesan* market for easy accessibility and shopping. Other renovated markets in *Akure* are also built with car-parking spaces.

The manufacturing textile industries should device a monitoring network for their products to reach points of sales as at when required. This will encourage small practices in the textile merchandising process are cogs in the trade. For example consumers complain of shortage in yards of fabrics sold to them after purchase. Some ripped-out holes are found in the folds of the fabrics which perhaps is partly a machine fault from the industry, or a wrong storage process by the retailer. The Standard Organization of Nigeria (S.O.N.) is expected to deploy monitoring team to reduce complaints of fabric consumers to Consumer Complaints Commission (CCC) if ever the organization exists.

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