

Textile Education and Communication Gap between the Industries and Consumers for Economic Development

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Abstract

The relationship between the Nigeria textile/ garment industries and consumers over the years have been great, especially before and during the early part of Nigerians independence. The Nigerian garment industries have gained a lot of global impact them, has compared to what is happening now that is current scenes. There is a yawning communication gap that exist between the manufacturers in textile sectors and consumers. In this regard, consumers do not get optimum satisfaction from textile products they purchase due to lack of adequate information about the quality and characteristics of the fabrics they purchase. The paper suggests the need for consumer's education as an integral part of our thought system and national policy making decisions has done developed countries. Focus must be based on consumer's education with emphasis on women's and youths who constitute a large percentage of consumers of textile/garment products. Information on care labels backed by law should be organized through seminars, conferences and workshops to sensitized consumers on the opportunity for consumers to interact with manufacturers and exchange their ideas on current development in the textile industries. Finally, existing consumer's protection agencies such as standard organization(SON) should be empowered in carrying out duties of protecting the consumers of textile products.

Keywords: Textile, Education, Communication, Industries, Consumers, Economics Development

Introduction

Textile has always been an inextricable part of man's existence. A man is born and laid to rest after death in textiles. Man is surrounded by textiles wherever he finds himself, whether in the air, on the sea, in space, home car etc. Textile products are used differently and for many purposes which includes covering, vehicles, interiors, furnishing and for social or class identity. Textile is a general term used to refer any material made of interlacing of fibers such as fabric, cloth, carpet, and belt among others. It is a flexible woven material consisting of network of natural or artificial fibers which are often referred

to as thread or yarn. Textiles, fabrics, yarns and clothing in most societies are used to convey meanings, history or even message. Furthermore, textiles and textile products are used to support and keep the body warm, which is used to protect the body from the various seasons.

Textiles are also used for medical and industrial sectors of the economy. For example, the automotive industries use textiles to make tyre cords, upholstery, carpeting, head liners, window runners, seat belts etc. Textile products are valuable resource materials for construction of roads and drainage systems among others.

Textile is regarded as the basic necessities of life after food, shelter and procreation. Man can abstain from food and shelter for a while but find it difficult to do without clothing his body with fabrics which is textiles.

In most developed countries of the world, textile and textile products are guided and followed up to meet up with changing trends for today's markets, facilitating creativity and innovation by removing organizational constraints that hinders developments and merchandising. Until, textiles and its various products is merchandised and utilized by the final consumer and its essence will not be met and satisfaction will not be achieved by both the producer, merchandiser and of course the consumers, which is the most important.

Who is a textile consumer?

A textile consumer is the person who purchases and uses textile and finished textiles goods or products. An example is garment, clothing's, household, industrial and medical end uses. Every man is a consumer of textile goods, this occurs in protection, adornment and for social and class identification.

Historically, the textile production was done and practiced in most traditional Nigerian societies at the subsistence level by families to satisfy the clothing needs of only the immediate members of the family. The traditional productions techniques were evidently time consuming and tedious and therefore could not meet up to the demands of the ever growing Nigerian population. However, by 1957 to 1972, the Nigerian textile industries blossomed such as Odua textiles mill, Arewa, Aba textile mill and united textiles in Kaduna were established. Others includes Afprints, Aswani and Five-star textile mills in Lagos. Industrialization and merchandising of textile productions through the use of automated looms and other forms of machines used at different stages of production. This process aided the relatively steady improvement in the textile production, thereby catering for the increased demand by the consumers then.

However, the consumption rate and demand has increased over the years due to the increase growth in population. With a population estimate of over two hundred and sixty million people, Nigeria needs at least two billion, nine hundred and thirty metres of fabrics, using an estimated average of fifteen metres per person per annum (Uzoigbe, 2006)

Development of Textile and Garment Merchandising at Present.

The present state unfortunately depicts that the relevance of textile and garment development and growth has decreased drastically over the past years. The country now relies on imported raw materials and foreign technology to make the industry function

The textile industries fail to impact on the world market because it is still struggling to meet up with the basis of establishment.

This lapses however provided an opportunity for the influx of foreign textile substitutes to the country. Most surface/ fabric designs produced bear foreign influences. The Africanized technique of a fabric with dominating patters of flowers, plants, leaves among other legacies from java in Asia. Nigeria markets are now flooded with many of these foreign designs thus jeopardizing the African was prints types which has been synonymous with the Nigerian textiles. Other mechanically produced printed fabrics known as “dress print” are usually characterized with small motifs that are randomly distributed on the surface of the fabrics. These surface designs are abstract or floral motifs are best described as all over patterns, other prints produced but most of the industries includes super prints, real wax, brocade and other weaves from the jacquard loom, off loom weaves such as cup ion lace shirting and suitable materials. The current state of Nigerian textiles and garment industries is pathetic; this is due to the fact that most of the textiles mills have folded up producing below capacity. it is evidence that there has been negligence of government on other aspects of the economy like the garment development, agriculture, arts and culture among others while channeling interest on oils economy alone. The social, political and infrastructural developments in the post-independence era in 1960 guarantees an upward stable increase in its economic profile. Globally, the workforce in garment and textiles production is around is a huge investment. China still dominates the textile and garment production. In 2002, the world consumers spent around \$1trillion worldwide buying clothes. Around one third of sales were in Western Europe, one third in North America and one quarter in Asia. Today, clothing and textile represent about 7% of world exports [Allwood, Lauren, Rudriguez & Baeken, 2006] global recession economy requires that development and assimilation of good maintenance culture, need to be given prior attention and it should an integral aspect of any production policy process.

It is important to note that consumer education should target women and youth because they are the largest consumer population of textile and garments products. Textile consumer need to be educated on how to choose aright and take proper care of textile products purchased by them.

Importance of Textile Consumer Education?

Consumer education generally refers to a process of helping a consumer to become an intelligent and a judicious buyer of goods, services and a discreet manager of his financial resources, and subsequently, a judicious user of whatever he has. Therefore, a textile consumer education can be regarded as the process of aiding and informing the consumer of textile products to select intelligently, and to take an insightful care of the products so selected as well as be informed of the existence of his rights as protected by law as a textile consumer for which he can seek redress in the court of law case of any discrepancies or infringement. In this regard, there is therefore no gain saying the fact that textile consumer education is a sine qua non in the contemporary Nigerian economy, especially when handled at an informal level can provide an alternative education to compliment the role of formal education is playing in national economy and development [Ali and Okeke, 2001]

Textile consumer education should be emphasized more particularly on non-formal education such as workshops and seminars for the benefit of the illiterate rural settlers most especially women and youth. Interactive sessions in seminars and workshops will educate consumers on the types of soaps and detergents that is best suitable for a particular textile when doing laundry. Laundry detergents continue to evolve with the continued industrial development so has to keep consumers informed and updated and improved detergents.

Also other important information necessary for textile consumers, which has long been neglected in the rights they have as consumers. Karpartkin and Been (2005) identify the consumer's rights as their rights to safety of use of any textiles purchased: their rights be informed about any textiles they intend to buy; their rights be informed about any textiles they intend to buy; their rights to choose textiles that will serve the purpose for which the consumer intends to use it for: and their rights to be heard by the appropriate agency or authority in case of violation of any of the rights by a textile industry or any of their agents.

In Nigeria consumer rights are instituted by agencies who ensure compliance to set standards and protection of the rights of the consumers of goods and services, such

government agencies include among others, the consumer protection council, standard organization of Nigeria (SON) and the Nigerian industrial standard (NIS). All these agencies are entrusted with the responsibility of ensuring standards and protecting consumers from unwholesome excesses of manufacturers and their agents “who rarely volunteer information about the shortcoming of their products.” (Kaparkin and Been, 2005)

To further enforce the consumer’s protection rights, textile industries should be enjoined to fill the communication gap that exists between the industry and consumers by establishing consumer education unit, to take care of providing periodic textile use and care education to consumers of their products. The trend in the past, given to the surplus natural resources, at least to the potentials of the country and her people, and the possibility of being ahead of other developing countries in Africa and beyond as well as in Nigeria, the garment production and merchandising had flourish at both cottage and industrial levels. This is the evidence based on the garment development and merchandising can regain its feet if the right steps are taken and right policies are implemented. It is true that many textile products have informative care labels on them but not every textile industries should provide the best knowledge of the characteristics of their products to consumers in an organized periodic workshops seminars or conferences.

Channels of Distributing Textile Products

Globally, the workforce in the clothing and textiles production was around 26.5 million in 2000. China still dominates the textile and clothing production [choi, powell,& cassil, 2005]. In 2000 the world’s consumers spent around \$1trillion naira worldwide buying clothes. Around one third of sales were in the Western Europe, one third in North America and one quarter in Asia. Today, clothing and textiles represent about 7% of the world’s export [Allwood, Laursen, Rodriguez & Backen, 2006]. In Bangladesh textile industries, there are three potentials strengths that are implemented to keep the garment developments and merchandizing industry going market force, governmental policy, and dry mechanism inside the industry [Yunus & Yamagata, 2012]

The distribution of information of textile and garment care /use has to be communicated to consumers of products from the manufacturers in that order from manufacturers, to the consumers for proper education on the use and care, and inversely from the consumers, back to the manufacturers in the form of complaints and observations of production defects. This process is done in most developed countries of the world. This helps most textile and garment manufacturers correct any such defects and improve on the quality of their products to better satisfy the consumers.

Textile and garment/clothing industries are important in the economic and social terms, in the short run, this is because it provides jobs, incomes especially for the women. It is also an export product that can generate foreign funds and investment, a thereby providing countries the opportunity for sustained economic development and growth, particularly in countries with appropriate policies and institutions on textiles and government productions. The potential of the textile and garment manufacturers to contribute to long run growth and development will depend not only on the attributes or desires of the investors, but also on the quality and effectiveness of government policies and institutions in developing countries to build on these investments. [Kaene & Velde, 2008]

It is however necessary to take care of consumers who may be frustrated by the absence of explicit informative care label on the textile products they purchase. As technologies continue to emerge in the market place to compete for consumers. Consequently, consumers require frequent educative information communicated to them to be able to determine the quality, sustainability, and safety of textile and garment products they are purchasing. Hence, the need for basic textile consumer education which will enable consumer choose right and ensure consumer equilibrium. It will also highlight the rights of a consumer which his protected by law as a citizen.

Conclusion

In conclusion the lack of education by government and manufacturers of textile and garment products is one of the major issues that affects the communication between Nigerian textile consumers and manufacturers. The textile industries need to create appropriate methods of educating their consumers of product's and also get feedbacks from consumers about their products. The fiber contents of the products they are buying, the weave structure safety, color and suitability and rights as consumers of textile and garment products are supposed to know how to properly take care of their textile products for durability.

Furthermore, the textile industries as a matter of fact should inculcate women and youth to mend the existing gap between them and the consumers.

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