



# PERCEIVED CONTRIBUTIONS OF FASHION INDUSTRY TO ECONOMIC GROWTH AND DIVERSIFICATION IN NIGERIA: UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' PERSPECTIVE

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## ABSTRACT

Nigeria is a country that is over dependent on crude oil revenue. As a result of drop in oil prices, the economy of the nation was affected. This has given rise to new innovations in economic diversification. Fashion industry has become an internationally and highly globalized industry and as a result of this, there is a growing competition in the industry. In Nigeria, the fashion industry has developed more exposure, participants, structure, presence, earnings and trainings. A recent overview of Nigeria's Gross Domestic Products (GDP) reveals that the Textile, Apparel and Footwear sector contributes to the nation's GDP.

This descriptive study was carried out to reveal the perceived contribution of fashion industry to the economy of Nigeria in terms of growth and development from the perspective of university students. The study sought to know the perception of university students about fashion and their attitude to fashion products. It also investigated the social and environmental impacts of fashion products on University students and identified the untapped benefits of fashion industry that can enhance growth and development of Nigerian economy. A close-ended questionnaire was validated and 200 respondents were chosen from second, third and fourth year students of Osun State University (UNIOSUN), Okuku campus, Osun state.

Study results showed that university students have a positive attitude towards fashion products as they have an understanding that fashion is beyond garment and footwear. Results also revealed that fashion industry has been contributing to the nation's economic growth and that if adequate measures are put in place; it can generate more revenue for the nation.

The study recommends the strategies that the government, fashion entrepreneurs and business owners and fashion consumers can apply to the industry to further boost the growth of the Nigerian economy.

**KEY WORDS:** Fashion industry, economic growth, economic diversification, university students

## INTRODUCTION

The fashion industry is one of the most important markets in Nigeria and the world at large. It is an industry that houses many talented hands and attracts investors from all over the world, thus making it grow continually. The value of fashion industry in Nigeria is over ten billion dollars (Agu and Onuoha, 2016) and it accounted for 0.47% of Nigeria's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Although, fashion itself is a modern European and American development, the colonial masters condemned African ways of life including fashion. This gave rise to a mindset amongst the people that what is African or made in Nigeria was not good enough. Although, many take fashion to be about dresses alone, it involves other forms of clothing and apparel such as shoes, accessories (head wears, jewelries, wristwatches, ties etc.), make up, skin care and other things that adorns the human body. It is one of the strongest forces in the world that has influenced people's way of dressing for years. Faurschou (1990) and Svendsen



(2006) agreed that anything that is put on the body such as tattoo, hair arrangement, disfiguring or scarring can be termed as costume, clothing or dress. Thus we can refer to fashion as clothing.

Fashion design was considered to have started with a simple seamster called Charles Frederick Worth in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. He was the first designer to have sewn his label into the garments he made. Before he set up his own fashion house in Paris, quite a number of anonymous dressmakers have handled clothing design and creation deriving fashion standards from styles worn by royalty. House of Worth became so popular that people began to consult with him on what they should wear. Worth was the one who began the tradition of not only creating clothing but also representing the symbol of the brand (Evans 2003). Fashion design as the art of applying design, aesthetics and natural beauty to clothing and its accessories, is influenced by social and cultural attitudes and has varied over time and place. It is therefore important for every fashion designer to have a creative and artistic personality and be able to express ideas through illustrations or sketches. Fashion illustration also known as fashion sketching is the art of communicating fashion ideas in a visual form that originates with explanation, drawing and painting. It involves the transmission of fashion through a diagram and it is the visual aid through which a fashion design is explained. It is mainly used by fashion designers to brainstorm their ideas on to paper or computer with the aid of digital software (Drake, 1994). Fashion is also considered to be a specific life style and cultural phenomenon that appeared at a certain period of time. It is portrayed as people's worship and preference toward the perception, behavior or subject with meanings that are specific. Usually, it is first raised by a small group of people and then a trend is formed with more and more followers and copycats until it becomes outdated (Arthur, 1997; Damhorst et al 1999).

In the world today, fashion industry has become an international and highly globalized industry and as a result of these, there is a growing competition in the industry. In the United States, the industry has long been one of the largest employers. The industry also accounts for a significant share of world economy output. Although, there is the tendency to equate fashion with garments and foot wears only, fashion can also be found in almost every human activity (Craik, 2009; Solomon & Rabolt, 2009). Fashion can be seen in furniture, art, cars, food, jewelries, hairstyles, cosmetics etc. as stated by Agu and Onuoha (2016). Because of the extension of fashion into other areas, there is an increasing sense of being fashionable among Nigerians in all works of life; students, civil servants, clergy, politicians, bankers, traders, celebrities, footballers etc. regardless of the economic situations surrounding them. Recently in Nigeria, the fashion industry has developed more exposure, participants, structure, presence, earnings and training. Many Nigerians now work in the industry as clothing stylists, clothing designers, fashion illustrators, fashion models, fashion photographers, makeup artists, hair stylists, cosmetologists, fashion journalists etc.

Nigeria is heavily dependent on oil export revenues and recent study shows that Nigeria and other oil producing countries suffered a severe blow from the last oil price crash. However, this has given room to new innovations in economic diversification. Since the price of crude oil dropped, the Nigerian government has given more attention to agriculture. The government wants to strengthen the sector so as to boost non-oil exports and increase the country's foreign exchange in the face of the dwindling oil situation. Another example is the venturing of Nigeria's state oil company into renewable fuels with a contract that see a bioethanol plant built in the state of Kebbi (northeastern Nigeria). The bioethanol will be derived from cassava and sugarcane. The world is rapidly changing and nations keep improving their economies. New technologies and new methods of doing things emerge rapidly. A lot of countries now produce on their own what they used to buy from other countries (such as agricultural produce, crude oil). Although Nigeria did not begin trade with oil (Esu and Udonwa, 2015), it is the largest oil exporting country in Africa and has a rapidly growing economy (Suberu *et al*, 2015). World Bank has described Nigeria as a key regional player in West Africa having the largest natural gas reserves on the continent and being the biggest oil exporter in Africa. It is also one of the countries with largest population of youth in the world (World Bank, 2017).

The world is gradually tending towards the use of non-chemical products in generating energy. It is high time the Nigerian government started looking elsewhere other than petroleum and Agriculture and focus on sectors that cannot be separated from our daily lives, sectors that would still be accepted globally irrespective of whatever global changes that may occur. Diversification provides the most competitive and strategic option for Nigeria in respect of her developmental challenges and background (Suberu *et al*, 2015). Diversification of the Nigerian economy will broaden her economic activities both in the production of goods and services and in the process, stabilizes the economy (Uzonwanne 2015). Economic diversity has the capacity to meet the basic requirement for sustainable development and also drive the expansion of environmental ability to meet people's needs by improving the technology, social organization, diversity of areas of economic activity and not over exploiting one aspect of



natural resources to the point of extinction and environmental degradation. It also secures equity within and between generations (Anyaehe and Areji, 2015). A diversified economy is one with a certain level of security due to the different revenue streams, which provide the nation with the ability for sustainable growth. This is because there is not a reliance on one particular type of revenue and this provides the nation with the security and reliability it needs should in case one economic revenue stream fails. In a diversified economy, every sector involved experiences growth as they all receive equal attention and adequate support. Although, the challenges faced by these sectors may differ from each other, the government puts in place adequate measures, which will help manage such challenges.

Worthy et al (2007) ascertained that fashion consumers especially women with eating disorders and sense of insecurities about their bodies tend to use clothing as a form of therapy by wearing apparels that help their body flaws. Similar to this, in the article written by Kang *et al.* (2013), it is stated that college students especially the undergraduates have the affinity to pick their clothing with the intention of hiding their physical flaws, getting assurance and at the same time, expressing themselves and being fashionable. However, Sinha and Moody (2010) stated that personality has a moderate influence on fashion preference while mood is a significant influencer of preference. Osman *et al* (2011) also revealed that mood is a product of fashion. That is, acquiring or owning a new piece of clothing elicits a positive mood. Gbadamosi (2012) suggested that the culture of clothing among women is a result of the combined efforts of religion, weather, personal and social factors. Mantyi-Ncube and Langwneya (2014) carried out a descriptive research on university female students' perceptions on factors influencing their dress code stated that the factors that influence clothing selection include the basic functions of the clothing (such as adornment, modesty, status, protection and identification), influence of friends, family and media, psychological factors, self-esteem, celebrities, environmental factors, cultural and demographic influences. They stated that modesty has no general definition as it is based on people's beliefs, which are often influenced by culture. Ideas, values, knowledge and all these vary with each community and region and are thus influencing culture in itself. Furthermore, the work of Ofori *et al* (2014) on perception of University of Ghana students towards campus female fashion revealed that there was no significant relationship between religion and perceptions towards female fashion trend but location might have influenced their choice of fashion. A higher percentage of the respondents stay in Accra where most of the clothes sold were body revealing. Also, it was perceived that students who travelled to western countries adopted some of the provocative western styles and introduced them on their return to the University campus. The demography showed that a higher percentage of the respondents were students within the age of 18 – 22 which implies that a larger part of the total population were around that age. Their results support the studies of Tai and Tam (2005) and Gawne and Oerke (1968) that young consumers of fashion products attached greater importance to clothing as a way of receiving approval, gaining acceptance and fitting into the society. Thus, there is a high probability that they choose to take up fashion that exposes vital body parts.

This study provides insight into opportunities that the Nigerian government can tap into. It reveals the relevance of the Nigerian fashion industry to the growth and development of the economy.

## METHODOLOGY

### Research Design

This is a quantitative research work that adopted the working together of other disciplines such as descriptive method of surveys and studies to identify basic facts and measure the opinions of the population as regards the subject of the research work. The descriptive survey design was also used to generalize findings and predict the behavior of the population.

### Population and Selection of Sample

This research focuses on university students but the targeted population consists of all second, third and fourth year students of the Faculty of Social Sciences, Osun State University (UNIOSUN), Okuku campus in Okuku, Osun state. This population was considered appropriate because it has more exposure to the economy of Nigeria as their course work allows for in-depth study of the economy. Their course work also gives room for more social activities, which in turn exposes them to the fashion world.

A total sample size of 200 students was selected using probability-sampling procedure and the type used was systemic sampling technique. The Faculty of Social Sciences has the departments of Economics, Geography, Political Science and Sociology. The respondents were systematically chosen using the list of students gotten from representatives of each class. The formula used to select the respondents was:



$$K = N/n$$

**Research Instrument**

Data collection methods have been defined as mechanisms a researcher employs to collect data from respondents of the study so as to answer the research questions (Saunders et al 2007; Wiles et al 2011; Silverman, 2013). This study utilized a questionnaire tool to collect primary data. A questionnaire tool in research is used to collect data where a researcher wants structured responses (Cox, 2012). The name of the instrument designed for this research work is The SEPB Tool. SEPB means Social & Environment, Perception and Benefits. The instrument was built on four (4) Likert scale ranging from Strongly Disagree (1), Disagree (2), Agree (3) and Strongly Agree (4). The Tool uses fixed alternative (closed-ended) questions with limited and specific responses to look inward towards the subject of the research work. The Tool was divided into two parts. The first part was designed to gather the demographic information of the respondents while part two was designed to have three sections B, C and D with each section targeted to give answers to the research questions.

**Validity and Reliability of the Research Instrument**

On the face of it, the instrument appears to be valid as it measures the variables it is supposed to measure such as the social and environmental impacts of fashion products on the respondents, perception of respondents as regards fashion and fashion products, and their opinion about the untapped benefits of fashion industry to the Nigerian economy. The instrument was also examined by a professional- a professor in the research field.

The instrument was built in a way that maintains the internal consistency of the responses given by the respondents. It also has in-built redundancy which helps keep consistency of responses in check. Prior to the main research work, a pilot study was conducted among the students of 200 and 300 levels at the University of Ibadan using the sample size of 60 students. This was done to test the reliability of the instrument and the data gathered was subjected to a reliability test using Cronbach's alpha. The result of the reliability coefficient gives the value of 0.796 as shown in the Table 1. This is in agreement with the Alpha coefficient of above 0.75 as commonly accepted rule of thumb that accepts reliability coefficient of above 0.75 as good reliability.

Cronbach's Alpha <sup>a</sup>	N of Items
.796	40

**Table 1 Reliability Statistics****Administration of Research**

The instrument was directly administered to the respondents with the help of a trained assistant who is a student of the university. Other sources of data (secondary data) include past research works, journals, related sites and magazines.

**Procedure for Data Analysis**

Descriptive statistics of simple frequency count and percentage was used to analyze data obtained from sections A which contains the demographic information of the respondents while mean and standard deviation were used to analyze data gathered from other sections of the instrument. Data gathered from the respondents was analyzed using SPSS version 20.0.

**Decision Rules for Using Mean Rating:**

The instrument is built on 4 Likert scale ranging from Strongly Disagree (1 point), Disagree (2), Agree (3) and Strongly Agree (4). Therefore the cut-off point for mean rating is calculated as follows:



$$\frac{1 + 2 + 3 + 4}{4}$$

Mean cut-off point= 2.5

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

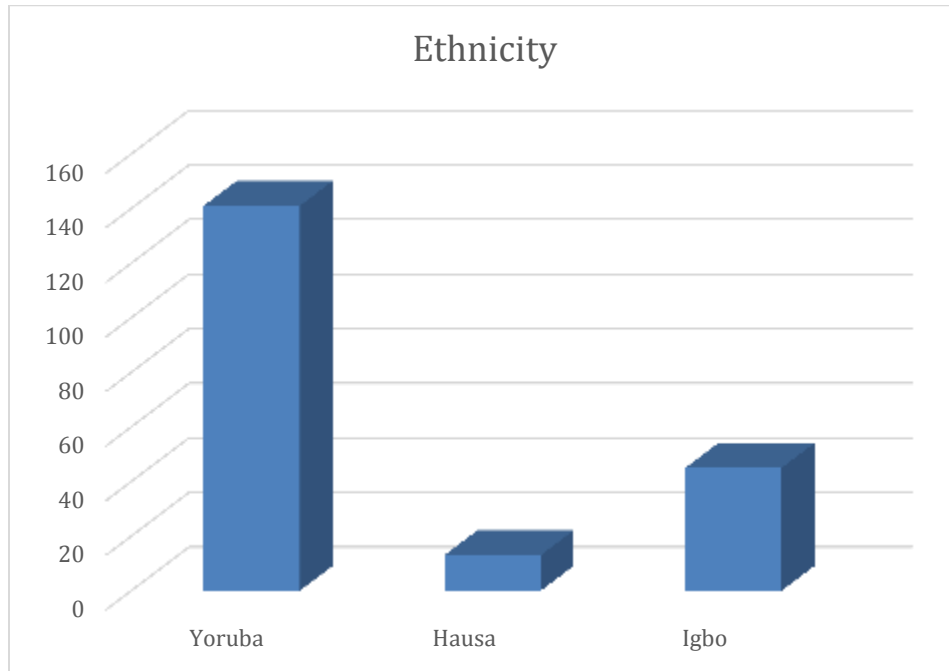
**Table 2: Socio-Demographic Information of Respondents**

Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
<b>Gender:</b>		
Male	51	25.5
Female	149	74.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Age:</b>		
Below 20 years	64	32.0
21 - 25 years	90	45.0
26 – 30 years	46	23.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Religion:</b>		
Christianity	115	57.5
Islam	85	42.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Ethnicity:</b>		
Yoruba	141	70.9
Hausa	13	6.5
Igbo	45	22.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>199</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>What is fashion to you?</b>		
A way to express my inner self	72	36.0
Conformability	84	42.0
Looking sensible and mature	18	9.0
Looking trendy and stylish	26	13.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Fashion is not just about garment and footwear, it is also about other products like accessories, (bags, jewellerys, sunshades etc.), cosmetics, beauty (makeup, hairstyle and body care)</b>	200	100.0
Yes	<b>200</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Total</b>		



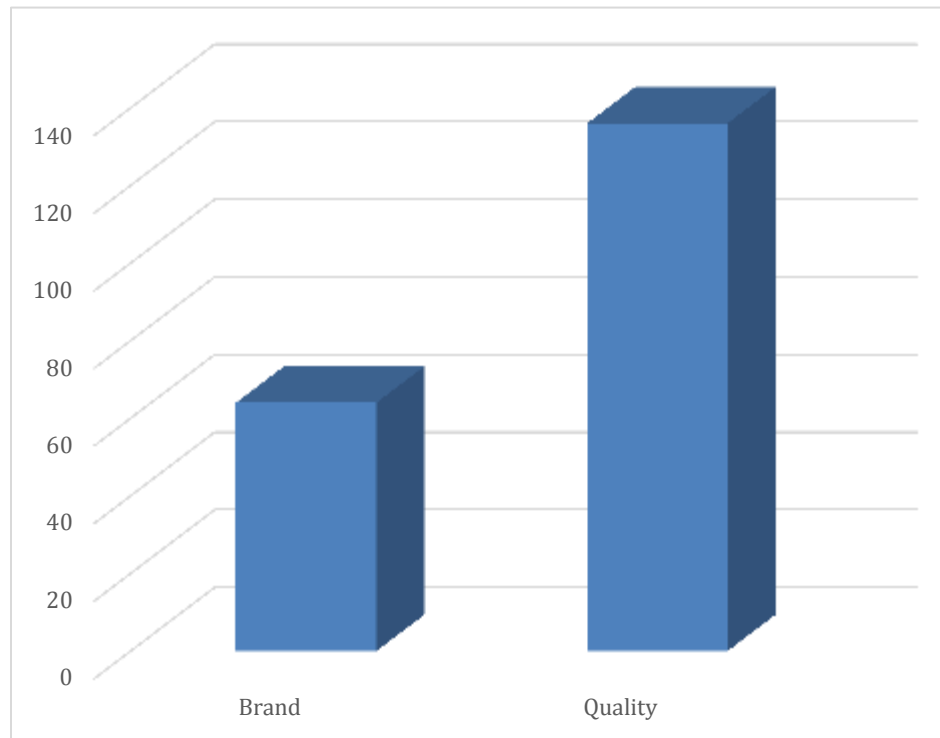
<b>Which of these fashion products would you rather spend more on?</b>		
Clothing	24	12.0
Footwear	11	5.5
Clothing & Footwear	27	13.5
Clothing, Footwear & Accessories	7	3.5
Clothing, Footwear & Make-up	7	3.5
Clothing, Footwear & Body care	62	31.0
Clothing, Footwear & Hairstyle	17	8.5
Clothing, Footwear, Accessories, Hairstyle & Body care	45	22.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Which one is more important to you when purchasing your fashion products?</b>		
Brand	64	32.0
Quality	136	68.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Which of these do you purchase?</b>		
Made in Nigeria/Made by Nigerian fashion products	42	21.0
Imported fashion products	38	19.0
Both	120	60.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>When do you purchase these fashion products?</b>		
During festive and occasion	34	17.0
All year round	96	48.0
Seasons	13	6.5
Anytime I feel like	57	28.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Field Survey (2018)



**Figure 1: Bar Chart showing the respondents' ethnicity**

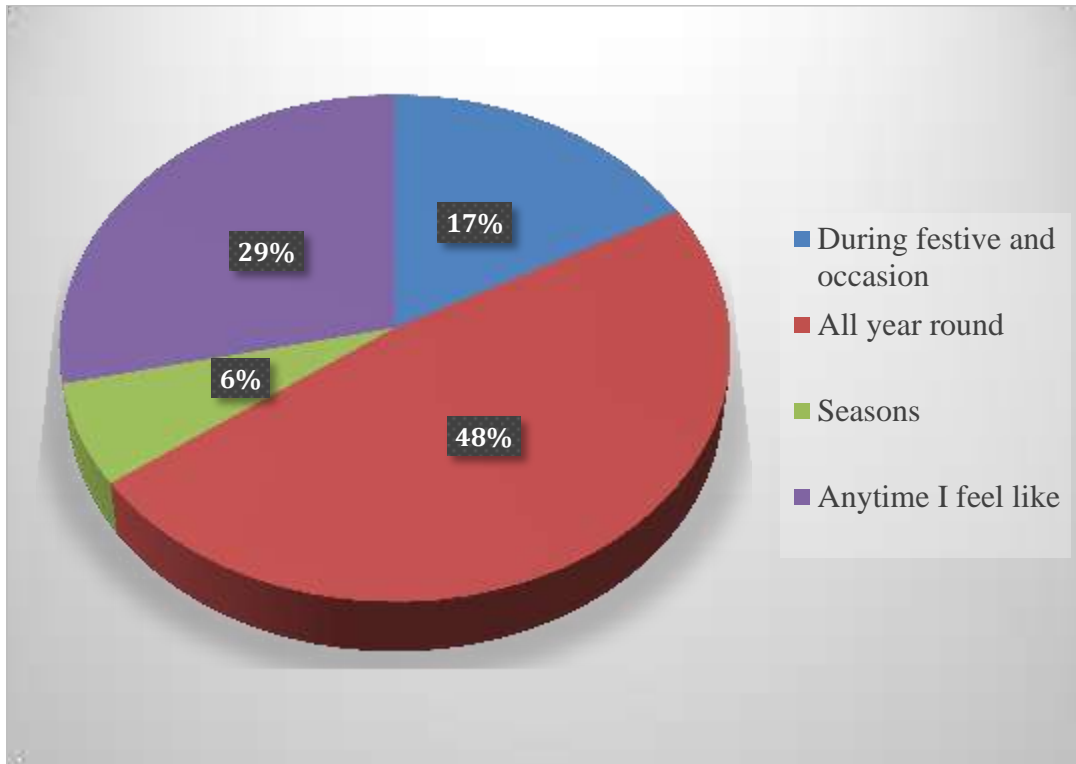
Source: Field Survey (2018)



**Figure 2: Bar Chart showing what the respondents consider in purchasing fashion products.**

Source: Field Survey (2018).





**Figure 3: Pie Chart showing when the respondents usually buy fashion products**

Source: Field Survey (2018)

### ANALYSIS OF RESEARCH QUESTIONS

**Analysis of Research Question 1:** What are the social and environmental impacts of fashion products on the university students?

**Table 3: Mean Rating and Standard Deviation of Social and Environmental Impacts of Fashion Products on the Respondents**

ITEM	Mean	Std. dev.	Remark
1 The fashion products used by my parents are not relevant in this period	2.89	.863	Accepted
2 Emotional expectation of the user needs to be considered while manufacturing fashion products	2.92	.616	Accepted
3 Social agenda of today's fashion is to express the consumer's identity in terms of lifestyle choices and their attitude	3.50	.511	Accepted
4 Lifestyle choices of fashion users changes from period to another period	3.46	.519	Accepted





5	Availability of different fashion products accord the users opportunity to choose befitting products and styles for different occasions	3.28	.450	Accepted
6	Present fashion trend has added a new element of elegance and natural wellbeing to the contemporary human existence	3.27	.448	Accepted
7	There are wages disparities in fashion industries and this cause inequality among fashion workers.	3.55	.498	Accepted
8	The amount of chemical used in the production of fashion products poses no risk on the consumer's health and environment	2.18	.631	Rejected
9	Fashion industry offers women better employment opportunities than they would have had in other sectors	2.98	.525	Accepted
10	Fashion industry produces products to satisfy consumers need to display his social status and uniqueness	3.38	.487	Accepted

**Analysis of Research Question 2:** What is the perception of university students on the relevance of fashion industry to economic growth and diversification in Nigeria?

**Table 4: Mean Rating and Standard Deviation of the perception of university students on the relevance of fashion industry to economic growth and diversification in Nigeria**

	ITEM	Mean	Std. dev.	Remark
1	Fashion industry helps in reducing level of unemployment in the country	3.35	.527	Accepted
2	Since fashion industry has numerous sub-sectors, therefore it can be a mean for economy diversification	3.44	.498	Accepted
3	Working together of fashion sub-sectors can be a key driver of economic growth	3.47	.500	Accepted
4	Fashion industry offers a lot of opportunities for self-development which in turn improves standard of living	3.50	.501	Accepted
5	Due to high rate of competitions among the producers in fashion industry, the output from the industry is of international standard.	3.17	.575	Accepted
6	Fashion industry has the potential of contributing to poverty reduction as it offers diverse job opportunities to the citizens	3.38	.485	Accepted
7	Fashion is a means of achieving development goal in the country	3.26	.504	Accepted



8	The pattern and effect of fashion industry in Nigeria has been affected by trade and other economic policies	3.20	.410	Accepted
9	Fashion industry is important because it forms the most part of SMEs and it belongs to the largest contributing markets with significant share of employment.	3.76	.431	Accepted
10	Fashion industry is an avenue for promoting our cultural heritage and attract foreign investors	3.19	.522	Accepted

**Analysis of Research Question 3:** What are the untapped benefits of fashion industry that can enhance growth and development of Nigerian economy?

**Table 5: Mean Rating and Standard Deviation of the untapped benefits of fashion industry that can enhance growth and development of Nigerian economy**

ITEM	Mean	Std. dev.	Remark	
1	Fashion industry is a major contributor to national income	199	3.32	Accepted
2	Fashion industry helps in reducing unemployment level in the country	200	3.39	Accepted
3	Fashion products are the dominant sources of exports and foreign exchange of all manufacturing exports	199	3.41	Accepted
4	Fashion industry is a fast growing industry that can improve the country's image by trading with other countries	200	3.30	Accepted
5	Fashion industry is a good tool for improving national Gross Domestic Products (GDP)	200	3.43	Accepted
6	Fashion industry is a means of generating high revenue for Nigerian government	199	3.50	Accepted
7	Hourly labour costs are higher in fashion industry; this reflects greater productivity in this industry.	200	3.17	Accepted
8	Fashion industry is a larger employer of labour than agricultural sector	200	3.35	Accepted
9	Fashion industry requires relatively low capital for start-up.	200	3.07	Accepted
10	The expansion of fashion industry can provide a base upon which to build capital for growing other sectors of the economy	200	3.38	Accepted

## DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

### Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Table 2 depicts the demographic attributes of the respondents and it reveals that majority of respondents 149 (74.5%) are females while males constitute 51 (25.5%) of the population. The analysis of the respondent's age shows that 64 (32%) of the respondents are below 20 years, while majority 90 (45%) are between the age range 21-25 years and 49 (23%) are between 26 - 30 years of age. The implication of this is that majority of the respondents are still young and are in their active and productive age. The result also shows that majority 115 (57.5%) of the



respondents are Christians while 84 (42.5%) of the respondents are Muslims. Moreover, 141 (70.9%) of the respondents are Yorubas, 13 (6.5%) are Hausas while 45 (22.6%) of the respondents are from the Igbo tribe.

Meanwhile, the results from the analysis of knowing the respondents' opinion about what fashion is reveals that 72 (36%) of the respondents believed that fashion is 'a way to express their inner selves', 84 (42%) of the respondents agreed that fashion is all about 'conformability', 18 (9%) of them agreed that fashion means 'looking sensible' while 26 (13%) of the respondents, fashion is all about 'looking trendy and stylish'. The table also reveals that all the respondents 20 (100%) agreed that fashion is not just about garment and footwear, it is also about other products like accessories, (bags, jewelries, sunshades etc.), cosmetics, beauty (makeup, hairstyle and body care). Moreover, 24 (12%) of the respondents would prefer to spend more on buying only clothing, 11 (5.5%) would prefer spending on footwear only, 27 (13.5%) of the respondents would prefer to spend more on both clothing and footwear, 7 (3.5%) would prefer spending on clothing, footwear, accessories and another on clothing, footwear and make-up respectively. Majority of the respondents 62 (31%) would prefer spending more on clothing, footwear and hairstyles, 17 (8.5%) would prefer to spend more on acquiring clothing footwear, accessories and hairstyles while 45 (22.5%) of the respondents would prefer to spend more on clothing footwear, accessories, hairstyles and body care. The results also shows that majority of the respondents 136 (68%) find fashion quality more important when buying fashion products while 64 (32%) saw product brand as more important factor that aids their purchase of fashion products. Meanwhile, 42 (21%) likes to buy made in Nigeria fashion products, 38 (19%) of the respondents like patronizing imported fashion products while more than half of the respondents 120 (60%) buy both the local and foreign made fashion products. The results also reveals that 34 (17%) of the respondents buy fashion products mostly during the festive period and when they have occasion that warrant it, 96 (48%) of the respondents said they buy fashion products all year round, 13 (6.5%) buy fashion products every season while 57 (28.5%) purchase fashion products whenever they feel like purchasing them.

## ANALYSIS OF RESEARCH QUESTIONS

**Research Question 1:** What are the social and environmental impacts of fashion products on the university students?

Table 3 shows the mean rating of responses on the social and environmental impacts of fashion products on the respondent. The results reveals that item 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9 and 10 have mean scores of 2.89, 2.92, 3.50, 3.46, 3.28, 3.27, 3.55, 2.98 and 3.38 respectively. These values are more than the mean cut off of 2.50 indicating that those items are accepted as the social and environmental impacts of fashion products on the respondents. The fashion products used by my parents are not relevant in this period. The implication of this is that fashion changes with time, and the innovative nature of fashion usually render the old fashion products obsolete. The results also reveal that fashion products impact on users' emotional expectation. More so, today's fashion helps the consumers to express their identity in terms of lifestyle choices and their attitude. In addition, availability of different fashion products accord the users opportunity to choose befitting products and styles for different occasions. Another social impact of fashion product is that the present fashion trend has influenced the elegance and natural wellbeing of human existence. The results also show that there are wages disparities in fashion industries and this cause inequality among fashion workers. Socially, fashion industry offers women better employment opportunities than they would have had in other sectors and also produces products to satisfy consumers need to display his social status and uniqueness. Meanwhile, item 8 with mean score of 2.18 is rejected, as the result is less than the mean cut off point of 2.5. This indicates that the amount of chemical used in the production of fashion products does pose risk on the health of fashion users and environment.

**Research Question 2:** What is the perception of university students on the relevance of fashion industry to economic growth and diversification in Nigeria?

Table 4 shows the results of the mean rating of responses on perception of university students on the relevance of fashion industry to economic growth and diversification in Nigeria. Item 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10 have mean scores of 3.35, 3.44, 3.47, 3.50, 3.17, 3.38, 3.26, 3.20, 3.76 and 3.19 respectively which are more than the mean cut off point of 2.50 indicating the perception of university students on the relevance of fashion industry to economic growth and diversification in Nigeria. The implication of this is that; the respondents perceived that fashion industry



helps in reducing level of unemployment in the country. They also see fashion industry as a means for economy diversification. Moreover, they perceived that working together of fashion sub-sectors can be a key driver of economic growth. The respondents agreed that fashion industry offers a lot of opportunities for self-development which in turn improves standard of living of people. As a result of high rate of competition among the producers in fashion industry, the output from the industry is of international standard. The respondents also perceived that fashion industry has the potential of contributing to poverty reduction in the country as it offers diverse job opportunities to the citizens and that fashion serves as a means of achieving development goal. However, the respondents see the pattern and effect of fashion industry in Nigeria to have been affected by trade and other economic policies. The results also revealed that fashion industry forms the most part of SMEs and it belongs to the largest contributing markets with significant share of employment and also it is an avenue for promoting our cultural heritage and attract foreign investors.

**Research Question 3:** What are the untapped benefits of fashion industry that can enhance growth and development of Nigerian economy?

The results of the analysis as shown on Table 5 depicts the mean rating of responses on the untapped benefits of fashion industry that can enhance growth and development of Nigerian economy. The results show that item 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10 have mean scores of 3.32, 3.39, 3.41, 3.30, 3.43, 3.50, 3.17, 3.35, 3.07 and 3.38 respectively which are greater than the mean cut off point of 2.50. This implies that those items are accepted as the untapped benefits of fashion industry that can enhance growth and development of Nigerian economy. This implies that; fashion industry is a major contributor to Nigeria national income; it helps in reducing the level of unemployment in the country. The results also show that fashion products are the dominant sources of exports and foreign exchange of all manufacturing exports in Nigeria and that the industry is a fast growing industry that can improve the country's image by trading with other countries. The results also reveals that fashion industry is a good tool for improving national Gross Domestic Products (GDP) as it is a means of generating high revenue for Nigerian government. Moreover, the result shows that hourly labour costs are higher in fashion industry, this reflects greater productivity in this industry and it is the largest employer of labour than in agricultural sector. Another benefit of fashion industry as revealed by the results is that fashion business requires a relatively low capital for start-up and so the expansion of fashion industry can provide a base upon which to build capital for growing other sectors of the economy.

From the results of this study, it can be seen that sex and religion has little or no impact on the perception of university students to fashion while age has impact on their perception of fashion products. This agrees with the results of the study carried out by Ofori *et al* (2014) at the University of Ghana, which stated that there is no significant relationship between religion and perception to fashion and that young consumers of fashion products attach greater importance to clothing as a way of receiving approval, gaining acceptance and fitting into the society (conformability). This further disagrees with the study of Barquet and Essenc (2015) that age has no impact on the students, clothing preference. However, results shows that university students have a sound knowledge of what fashion is and they also have a positive attitude towards fashion products. A larger percentage of them believed that fashion has gone beyond ordinary garments and foot wears according to Frings (1999) and that it extends to other things such as accessories, cosmetics, beauty etc.

Although, many of the students would rather conform in their choice of fashion, some others have their personalities infused in their choice of fashion. This does not totally agree with the works of Sinha and Moody (2010); Barquet and Essenc (2015); where they stated that mood is a significant influencer of students' choice of fashion. The issue of conformity also supports the studies of Gawne and Oerke (1969); Gbadamosi (2012); Mantyi-Ncube and Langwneya (2014); that fashion among university students is about fitting into the society and that social factors, environmental factors and influence of family and peer influences students' choice of fashion.

Also, this study reveals that majority of the respondents (68%) would rather go for quality than brand when purchasing fashion products. This supports the research of Mantyi-Ncube and Langwneya (2014), which revealed that most of their respondents would go for quality rather than brand. More so, it was accepted that fashion industry produces products to satisfy consumers' need to display their social statuses and uniqueness. This is in accordance with the study of Mantyi-Ncube and Langwneya (2014) that ascertained that status and identification are factors that influence students' dress codes. In a nutshell, the result from this study supports some results from previous studies



of students' perception, more than it supports the others. However, the results take into consideration some other factors, which were not largely supported.

This study accepts that the present fashion trend has added a new element of elegance and natural wellbeing to the contemporary human existence. This reflected in the studies of Kwon (1991), who observed that fashion is a tool that is used by some to boost their self-esteem and change whatever negative perception that might be felt about them. Worthy *et al* (2007) also ascertained that fashion consumers especially women with eating disorders and sense of insecurities about their bodies tend to using clothing as a form of therapy by wearing apparels that help their body flaws.

Furthermore, results of this study revealed that fashion industry plays important roles in the economic growth and diversification of the nation. The industry offers a lot of opportunities, which in turn reduce unemployment in the nation and also improve the standard of living. It has numerous sub-sectors, which the nation can diversify to and due to the increased competition amongst fashion producers; fashion products are constantly being improved upon. This makes the fashion products to be of international standard. Most Nigerian fashion products can now compete favorably in the international market. Also, trade and other economic policies have affected the pattern and effect of fashion industry in Nigeria. This supports the neo-classical growth model by Robert Solow that the part and speed of an economy's growth are endogenous policy variables that are within the ambit of policy makers and not homogenous policy. This therefore, implies that Nigerian policy makers should make every urgent effort to encourage diversification of our resources (endogenous) and not encouraging mono-economy, which is (homogenous). It also supports Davenant's approach, which was testified to by Ekpo and Umoh (2014) that Nigeria tried it and it worked. Davenant's approach as regards industrialization talks about local production of imported consumer items and putting in place protective measures like tariffs, quotas etc. that will ensure that domestic industries are allowed to grow and in the short run, create jobs.

The Nigerian fashion industry still has a lot of untapped benefits that can enhance growth and development of the economy. This study reveals that fashion products are the dominant sources of export and foreign exchange of all manufacturing exports and because the fashion industry is a fast growing one, it is a good tool for improving national Gross Domestic Products (GDP), generating high revenue and also improving the nation's image by trading fashion products with other nations. Fashion industry requires a relatively low capital for start-up and is a larger employer of labour than the Agricultural sector. Its expansion can provide a base upon which to build capital for growing other sectors of the economy. This study simply reveals that fashion is a globally accepted practice, which thrives regardless of global and economic changes that may occur, and that fashion industry is capable of improving Nigeria's economy in terms of growth and development.

## **SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION**

### **Summary of Findings**

The analysis of the two hundred (200) questionnaires that were filled by the respondents reveals that respondents have a positive attitude towards fashion products. The analysis also shows that fashion industry has been contributing to the nation's economic growth and if adequate measures are put in place, the industry can generate more revenue for the nation.

### **Implications of Findings**

The findings from this study have implications for potential positive changes at the national level, industrial level and individual level. The data from this study reveals some practical applications that can be adopted at the various levels. This study shows that fashion is a globally accepted practice and if harnessed properly, it is capable of improving the economy of the nation. Also, the Nigerian fashion industry is a sector of the economy that requires immediate attention by the Nigerian government, as it is a larger employer of labour than the agricultural sector, it requires a relatively low capital for startup and its expansion can provide a base upon which to build capital for growing other sectors of the economy. More so, the study shows that a quantitative approach to research is effective in identifying basic facts, measuring the opinions and predicting the behavior of the targeted population.





## CONCLUSION

This study simply reveals that fashion is a globally accepted practice, which thrives regardless of global and economic changes that may occur, and that fashion industry is capable of improving Nigeria's economy in terms of growth and development.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings from this study, the researchers recommend that

### 1. The Government:

- Should strive to expand the fashion industry and grow all other sub-sectors in the industry, as this would enable the nation tap into the numerous benefits of the industry.
- Should review existing laws and policies and also make new ones that will benefit and encourage the growth of Nigerian fashion industry such as policies that will promote the patronage of made-in-Nigeria fashion products. This would not only promote our cultural heritage and attract foreign investors; it would also boost the nation's economy.
- Should create programs targeted at sensitizing Nigerians on the need to patronize made-in-Nigeria fashion products. If this can be done consistently and effectively, it will change the orientation that imported fashion products are better than made-in-Nigeria fashion products. It will also increase the patronage of made-in-Nigeria fashion products.
- Should organize training programs both locally and internationally for entrepreneurs, business owners and producers in the industry. This will broaden their fashion horizons and help them strive towards self-improvement.
- Should support entrepreneurs and business owners in fashion industries by giving grants, incentives and loan without interest. This will lead to the expansion of the industry and break financial limitations that are being faced in and by the industry.

### 2. Entrepreneurs, Business Owners And Producers in the fashion industry:

- Should always work towards improving themselves and their products. They should read more books, attend trainings and seminars on fashion, get educated etc. These will enable them keep up with the fashion trend in the world, make fashion products that are relevant to every season and also compete favorably in the fashion world.
- Should have good business ethics and integrity should be held in high regard. This will help to earn the trust of fashion consumers and increase patronage.
- Should put into consideration, all kinds of personalities and styles when making fashion products e.g., plus size persons. This will ensure that no Nigerian fashion consumer is left out of the purchasing pyramid.
- Should always make products of good quality and sell at affordable prices. These will encourage fashion consumers to patronize made-in-Nigeria products and also discourage the purchase of imported fashion products. Increase in patronage will increase the national income, improve its GDP and also boost the economy.
- Should maximize locally sourced materials in the production of their products. This will increase the growth of other sectors of the economy and in turn boost the economy of the nation.
- Should strive to build sustainable businesses, as it will help in the expansion of the industry.

### 3. Consumers of fashion products:

- Should embrace made-in-Nigeria products. The patronage of made-in-Nigeria fashion products will contribute to the nation's GDP
- Should showcase made-in-Nigeria products both at home and abroad. This will not only promote our cultural heritage but also attract foreign consumers and investors.

## CONTRIBUTION OF STUDY TO RESEARCH

Prior to this study, previous research works that are related to this study suggest that a nation should have multiple revenue streams so as to be secure and grow sustainably. Some studies also reveal that Nigeria, being a mono-economic nation depends heavily on crude oil and that the nation should diversify into other sectors to avoid



further decline in the growth rate of her economy. Furthermore, some studies analyzed the importance of fashion to consumers and factors that influence their choice of fashion. Some also analyzed the impacts of fashion industry on the economies of other nation of the world. However, these researchers did not deeply explore the fashion industry and analyze it as a tool for economic growth and diversification particularly in Nigeria.

This study reveals that the fashion industry is a good spot for economic diversification in Nigeria. It did not just point out the fact that Nigeria is over dependent on oil revenue, it went further to explore the fashion industry in Nigeria by analyzing the perception of university students on the contribution of the industry to Nigeria's economic growth. It also examines the social and environmental impacts of the industry's output (fashion products) on university students and investigates the untapped benefits of the industry that can enhance growth and development of the Nigerian economy.

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