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A Survey of Fashion Reconsumption Techniques Employed by Second Hand Clothing Retailers in Port Harcourt, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study examined fashion re-consumption techniques employed by second hand clothing retailers in Port Harcourt, Nigeria. Specifically, the study examined existing techniques adopted by the retailers and also make constructive proposal on innovative techniques that could further enhance the integrity of the products. A sample of 153 second-hand clothing retailers was systematically drawn from a population of 437, being the registered members of the Railway Flyover Market Union' in Mile-One market and The Great Second-hand Clothing Committee' in Oil-Mill market, both in Port Harcourt metropolis. The structured questionnaire titled "Fashion Re-consumption Innovative Practices Questionnaire (FRIPQ)" was used to collect data from the respondents. Descriptive statistics of mean scores, frequencies and standard deviation were used to analyse the retrieved data. It was evident from the result that second-hand clothing retailers in Port Harcourt actually carry out fashion re-consumption practices on second-hand clothing and they agreed with the proposed innovative techniques that could be used to enhance the integrity of second-hand clothing products. The study recommended among others that second hand clothing dealers need formal training in order to add value to their second-hand products, by adopting better innovative options which will ensure an improved sales turnover.

1. Introduction

Sustainable clothing consumption is the use of clothing for the purposes beyond utilization needs which is achieved, while enabling the future generations to meet their clothing needs. Fashion re-consumption has become trendy in the field of clothing, due to the economic status of many who may not or be able/willing to afford new clothes and accessories.

Stubin (2011), pointed out that a second-hand clothing or used clothing are clothing that are being purchased by or otherwise transferred to a second or later end user. Used clothes can also simply mean that, it is no longer in the same condition as it was when transferred to the current owner. Brown and Wilmanns (1997) explained that second-hand clothing can benefit the purchaser as the price paid is lower than the same items when bought new. If the reduction in price is more profitable for the possibly shorter remaining lifespan, there is a net benefit. Selling unwanted clothes or second-hand clothing instead of discarding them obviously benefits the seller. The sellers derive economic benefits of income. The profits they gain from selling second-hand clothing have sustained the household of the most

dealer or retailers. Secondly, most people go into the business to improve their standard of living. Some of these fashion products are: tops, shirts, bras, trousers, girdles, bags, and among others (Brown and Wilmanns (1997).

Recycling, remodeling, and reconstruction of second-hand clothing through the second-hand market reduces the use of resources in manufacturing new goods, and diminishes waste that must be disposed of, to the significant of environmental benefits. However, manufacturers who profit from sales of new goods loose corresponding sales. Scientific research shows that, buying used clothing or goods reduces carbon footprint and CO₂ emissions significantly compared to the complete production cycle, because less production of raw material sourcing and logistics are involved. Second-hand clothing may have faults which are not apparent even when examined. Second clothing may cause problems beyond their value, which in turn may cause an infestation that is difficult and expensive to eradicate Hansen (2004).

Braungart (2002) asserted that fashion re-consumption is to use clothing items again after it has been used. This includes conventional reuse of garments where they are used again for the same function, and new-life reuse where they are used for a different function. Second-hand clothing distribution had taken place before the 1960s as gifted items of used clothing from friends and family. But the evolution of second-hand clothing began earnestly in the late 1960s, with the development of second-hand shops and thrift stores. Since in 1960s, second-hand clothing has risen in popularity and now is made available in consignment stores, and garage sales. Second-hand clothing and accessories include shirts, T-shirts, blouses, shoes, bags, towels, belts, curtains, bedspread, undergarment, brassier, girdles, babies clothes and among others. Some of these articles are subjected to certain innovation by the retailers in order to satisfy the consumers.

According to the Business Dictionary (2014), innovation refers to changing or creating effective process, product and ideas that can increase business success. It is the process of translating an idea or creativity into a good or service that adds value or for which customers will pay. Innovative practices for enhancing the value of second-hand clothing, are the methods explored by retailers to satisfy the needs of the consumer, and to increase the buyers' purchasing power. According to Connolly (2003), fashion is being re-consumed in several ways; some include: (a) recycling and reuse, which is the breaking down of the used clothing items into raw materials for the making of new ones. Reuse is by taking useful products and exchanging them, without reprocessing them. Reuse help to save time, money, energy, and resources. In broader economic terms, reuse offers quality products to people and organizations with limited means, while generating jobs and business activity that contribute to the economy; (b) textile refurbish of second-hand clothes, which involves reprocessing used clothing, fibrous material and clothing scraps from the manufacturing process. (c) cute outfits of old clothes, which involves bringing out hidden fashion design and converting old clothes into cute new

outfits using scraps, leftovers and craft paints. Greig (1992) added that if the garments revamping has rips, tears or stains, imagination should be applied to incorporate them into the designs; (d) shortening and altering an old dress, which involves the clothing being laid on a flat surface, and with a chalk used to mark the new hemline, and the process continues til the clothing is made like a new one; (e) applying dye and starch to renew the second-hand clothing is one of the serious businesses that dry cleaners do in fashion business; (f) renovation or redesigning of clothes. Glosson, Meek and Mock (1997) states that, to redesign a garment is to change it into fashion or giving it a fresh look.

Historically, financial motivation was the main driver of reused clothes. In the developing world, this driver can lead to a very high level of fashion re-consumption. However, rising wages and consumers' demand for the convenience of disposable clothing products has made the fashion re-consumption of products low in richer countries, leading to the demise of many fashion re-consumption businesses. Although Current environmental awareness, is gradually changing attitudes, regulations, and the new re-packaging are gradually reversing the situation.

The fashion business in Nigeria, particularly in Port Harcourt has taken a new shape. The recently demolished mile one market in River state, Nigeria, had a part that was devoted entirely to the trade on second-hand clothing. Stalls at central motor park, Port Harcourt are filled with second-hand clothes. Traders who hawked their clothing wares on the road usually call on passers-by to patronize them. Hamilton (2003) postulated that, the range of items in the market ranged from suits to brassiere, from neck ties to blue jeans, from Hugo Boss long sleeve shirts to Gap T-shirts, from men's underpants to ladies' slips, and from jackboots to office shoes, and all kinds of second-hand clothes one could think of. Many of the traders in the market had the pieces of clothing on a huge pile through which one could rummage, looking for a piece of clothing that might catch one's attention. In fact fashion re-consumption of second-hand clothing in Port Harcourt, has remained an innovative practice for enhancing the value of second-hand fashion industry. The lucrativeness of fashion business has made a lot of clothing retailers a success in the business.

Retailers that deal on bend down boutique (first grade *okrika*) pay for shops, sales attendants, and other sundry bills. That explains why the second-hand clothes are expensive. In Port Harcourt, most of these second-hand clothes boutique could be found at densely populated areas of Diobu and streets of residential areas. Boutiques in choices areas like GRA, Genesis, polo-club and Hotel presidential are stocked with expensive designer second-hand clothes, usually patronised by the rich and affluent people in the society. Second-hand clothing retailers make a lot profit and buyers are not complaining because, they derive maximum satisfaction for every kobo they spend on the goods and services obtained from the business. Many people including workers in the state civil service, factory workers, the rich

and the poor buy second-hand clothes; they dry-clean them and use them in their homes. The society needs them because second-hand clothes serve many purposes and receives more patronage from the end-users (Jemina, 2010).

Jackson (2006) stated that it is worthy to note that, most second-hand clothing dealers adopt relevant strategies to attain a sustainable fashion business; in some cases, one does not need to bend down to check them out because some traders 'add value' to the items they sell by taking time to launder them, starch them, iron them and display them on hangers at their stalls. The prices of those are higher, but they are also easier to inspect so that the potential buyer does not have to take the time to rummage through a pile on the ground.

Most of them will refurbish and recycle the textile, making a new clothing come out from the reused ones. Although these methods of innovative practices on second-hand clothing tend to make the business more sustainable, but the researcher observed that some of these practices, are not professionally carried out. Thus, the study intends to examine fashion re-consumption innovative practices adopted by second hand clothing retailers to enhance the value of their clothing merchandise in Port Harcourt Metropolis.

A closer examination of second-hand fashion industry in Nigeria, particularly in Port Harcourt, reveals that fashion re-consumption is growing progressively. One would wonder why the business is lucrative and the various ways employed by second-hand clothing retailers to enhance the value of the business. Even though sustainability in the second-hand fashion business is still an emerging agenda, many authors have recognised the importance of investigating how sustainability could be achieved in the business. Despite the influx of *okirika* or second hand clothing business in Nigeria, particularly in Port Harcourt, some retailers just open the bales of clothes and sell without thinking of how the value of the clothing materials can be enhanced. There are many innovative practices adopted by second-hand retailers/dealers to enhance the value of second-hand clothing. These adopted strategies and practices may include recycling of discarded fashion items, textile refurbishing of second-hand clothes, cut of outfit out of old clothes, applying dye and starch to renew the clothing, renovation, redesigning and reconstruction of clothes, shortening/alteration and application of sewing notions, dyeing and ironing, patching and repurposing of old clothing and among others. The researcher observed that some of the innovative practices employed by the retailers are not professionally handled. Some of them do not achieve the expected fit and in other cases inappropriate sewing notions and wrong colour of threads are used. Many of these second-hand clothing merchandise look different from their original structure and styling as a result of these innovative practices. The dealers lack the technical-know how to operate the recycling machines to obtain the related clothing and materials from second-hand clothing. Some of them tend to handle the business shabbily. But there are ways these second-hand clothing and accessories can be enhanced to compete more than what it is obtain from the retailers. Based on these

problems, the researcher was propelled to investigate into fashion re-consumption innovative practices for enhancing the value of second-hand clothing merchandise among retailers in Port Harcourt Metropolis, Rivers State.

2. Purpose of the Study

The general purpose of the study was to examine fashion re-consumption techniques employed by second hand clothing retailers in Port Harcourt, Nigeria. Specifically, the study examined existing techniques adopted by the retailers and also made constructive proposal on innovative techniques that could further enhance the integrity of the products.

3. Research Questions

1. What are the existing innovative practices adopted by second-hand clothing retailers to enhance the value of second-hand clothing merchandise?
2. What value-addition techniques could be employed to enhance the integrity of the second-hand clothing?

4. Methodology

The study adopted descriptive survey research design. It was carried out in Port Harcourt metropolis in River State, South South of Nigeria. The population of the study consisted of all the registered second-hand clothing retailers in Port Harcourt metropolis, specifically in two major associations namely – 'the Railway Flyover Market Union' in Mile One market and The Great Second-hand Clothing Committee' in Oil Mill market both in Port Harcourt Local Government Area and Obio/Akpor Local Government Area respectively. A total of 437 persons constituted the population. Two hundred and forty (240) members from Mile-One market and 197 members form Oil-Mill market (from the above named association). A sample size of 153 persons which represents 35% of the population was used for the study.

A questionnaire titled "Fashion Re-consumption Innovative Practices Questionnaire (FRIPQ)" was designed for the study. It was made up of three sections. Section "A" contained information on demographic data of the respondents such as gender, age, educational qualification and others; section "B" contained the innovative practices used to enhance the value of second-hand clothing while section "C" contained the proposed value addition techniques to enhance the integrity of second-hand clothing products. The questionnaire was designed with a 4-point scale option method as follows: Strongly Agreed (SA) = 4 points, Agree (A) = 3 points, Disagree (D) = 2 points and Strongly Disagree (SD) = 1 point. The respondents were expected to tick (✓) in the column with appropriate alternative that showed the extent of agreement to each statement.

The research instrument was validated by 5 experts and the internal consistency of the study instrument was determined using test retest reliability. A value of 0.84 was obtained at the first instance and when the reliability was re-examined,

the value was 0.86 which affirmed the internal consistency of the instrument. Data collected from the field were prepared in tables using descriptive statistics such as frequency, percentages, means and standard deviation.

5. Results

The findings from the data analysed are presented below:

5.1. Demographic Data of the Respondents

The demographic data of the respondents were collated and the percentage distribution in the total sample was computed in each case. The data showed that male respondents were 64 (41.8.9%) while female respondents

numbered 89 (58.2%). The frequency and percentage distribution of 45 (29.4%), 76 (49.7%), 32 (20.9%) were obtained for age ranges 20-25, 26-31 and 32-37 respectively.

Educational analysis of the respondents showed that 57 (37.3%) of the respondents were First School Leaving Certificate holders; 48 (31.3%) had Senior Secondary School Certificates, 29 (19%) were NCE/ND holders and 19 (12.4%) had First Degree and equivalent qualifications. The marital status of the respondents showed that 93 (60.8%) were single, 44 (28.8%) were married, 9 (5.9%) were divorced and 7 (4.7%) were widowed.

Research Question 1: What are the existing innovative practices adopted by second-hand clothing retailers to enhance the value of second-hand clothing merchandise?

Table 1. Summary of Respondents' scores on existing innovative practices for enhancing the value of second-hand clothing.

S/N	Statement	Mean Score	SD
1	Second-hand clothing are properly cleaned and laundered before selling.	3.35	0.64
2	Some second hand garments are changed into the current fashion before selling.	3.30	0.59
3	Old faded clothes are re-dyed to look new.	3.43	0.50
4	Second hand clothes are starched and ironed before giving out for sale.	3.91	0.29
5	Second hand shoes and bags are mended and polish before sale.	3.27	0.49
6	Trousers are change into shorts by the dealers.	3.34	0.50
7	Old clothes can be patched in a jean apparel.	3.57	0.50
8	Re-dying of handbags and shoes are practice by business dealers.	3.33	0.65
9	Long skirts and blouses are changed into short ones.	3.80	0.35
10	Chemicals are used to remove stains on second hand clothes.	3.73	0.45
11	Second hand clothing are reduced to fit different figure types.	3.70	0.46
12	New buttons are used to re-design some shirts and garments.	3.25	0.44
13	Sewing notions like trimming and ribbon are used to make some garment to look new.	3.33	0.47
14	Brassier strings are altered to fit and look good.	3.57	0.64
15	Beading works are applied to some garment before sale.	3.50	0.62
16	Applique and rosette are used to cover up for strong stain and tear.	3.63	0.49
17	Shoes sole and buckles are replaced and mended before sale.	3.76	0.43
18	Shirts and trousers are re-constructed to different size and shapes.	3.67	0.49
19	These practices add values to the second hand clothes and accessories.	3.67	0.51
	Average	3.53	9.51

The results presented in Table 1 shows the mean Scores of respondents on of on the use of existing innovative practices for enhancing the value of second-hand clothing products. The respondents scored high and above the mean cut-off mark (2.5) for some identified existing innovative practices for enhancing the value of second-hand clothing such as starching and ironing of second hand clothing products before giving out for sale (mean score = 3.91); changing of long skirts and blouses into short ones (mean score = 3.8); and mending of shoes sole and replacement of buckles before

sale (mean score = 3.76). However, the retailers also scored above the mean score on the use of other existing innovative practices for enhancing the value of second-hand clothing products. The average score of the respondents (3.53) shows that second hand clothing retailers in Port Harcourt actually use the identified existing innovative practices to enhance the second hand clothing products.

Research Question 2: What value-addition techniques could be employed to enhance the integrity of the second-hand clothing?

Table 2. Summary of Respondents' scores on proposed innovative techniques for enhancing the value of second-hand clothing.

S/N	Statement	Mean Score	SD
1	Second-hand clothing should be properly clean and laundered before putting them up for sale.	3.80	0.4
2	Embellishments such as beads, buttons, trimming and ribbons should be used to enhance the value of second-hand clothes.	3.57	0.5
3	Fast dye should be used for improving worn out or faded colour garment.	3.68	0.47
4	Matching thread should be used when carrying out repairs.	3.50	0.62
5	Increase seam allowances for individual consumers adjustability.	2.67	0.7
6	Out-dated silhouettes should be re-shaped into fashionable silhouettes.	2.95	0.92
7	Worn out leather products like bags and belts should be re-dyed and polished.	3.57	0.5
8	Over-print or use iron on motifs to give torn and stained fabrics an added value.	3.88	0.32
9	Appropriate chemicals should be used to remove stains.	3.67	0.47
10	Use good quality second hand fabric for reconstruction and redesigning.	3.63	0.48
	Average	3.49	5.38

From Table 2, the mean Scores of respondents on the adoption of proposed innovative techniques for enhancing the value of second-hand clothing show that second hand clothing retailers scored high on the adoption of over-print or use iron-on-motifs to give torn and stained fabrics an added value (mean score = 3.88). High scores were also obtained for the laundry of second-hand clothing (mean score - 3.80) and use of fast dye for improving worn out or faded colour garment (mean score = 3.68). The average score of the respondents (3.49) shows that second hand clothing retailers admit that the innovative techniques presented to them will indeed enhance the integrity and improve the value of second-hand clothing products.

5.2. Discussion of Findings

On the existing innovative practices adopted by second hand clothing retailers to enhance the value of second hand clothing, the study revealed that starching and ironing of second hand clothing, changing of long skirts and blouses into short ones and mending of shoes sole and replacement of buckles before sale were the most adopted. The second hand clothing retailers also adopted over-print or use iron-on-motifs on torn and stained fabrics, laundry of second-hand clothing and use of fast dye on worn out or faded colour garment in order to enhance their values. These practices according to Connolly (2003) are classified as textile refurbishing and cute outfits of old clothes, which involves bringing out hidden fashion design and converting old clothes into cute new outfits using scraps, leftovers and craft paints. Moreover, Greig (1992) added that shortening and altering an old dress has the potency of making the clothing to look like a new one. Applying dye and starch to renew the second-hand clothing is one of the serious businesses that dry cleaners do in fashion business and renovation or redesigning of clothes is to change it into fashion or giving it a fresh look (Glosson, Meek and Mock, 1997).

The results of the study also showed that there are more uneducated second-hand clothing retailers than the educated ones. Moreover, the populations of the males dominate the females in second-hand clothing retailing. The dominance of uneducated retailers in second-hand clothing can be attributed to the fact that the business is generally considered to be patronized by the poor as put by Waste Online (2009).

However, the presence of educated persons in the business has significantly shown that second-hand clothing products can be packaged in an acceptable manner other than the conventional “*okirika*” bend-down-select. The study results which revealed the various methods adopted by the retailers to enhance the value of the second-hand clothing products is supported by the findings of Jackson (2006) who stated that most second-hand clothing dealers adopt relevant strategies to attain a sustainable fashion business; in some cases, one does not need to bend down to check them out because some traders ‘add value’ to the items they sell by taking time to launder them, starch them, iron them and display them on

hangers at their stalls. The prices of those are higher, but they are also easier to inspect so that the potential buyer does not have to take the time to rummage through a pile on the ground.

6. Conclusions

In a descriptive survey, fashion re-consumption innovative practices adopted for enhancing the value of second-hand clothing merchandize among retailers in Port Harcourt was investigated. The types of second-hand clothing products and the existing innovative practices used by the retailers to enhance the value of the products were examined. The study also made a constructive proposal on innovative techniques that could further enhance the integrity of the products. From the results of the study, the following conclusions are drawn:

1. Second-hand clothing retailers in Port Harcourt actually carry out fashion re-consumption techniques on second-hand clothing to enhance the value and the integrity of the products..
2. The retailers were willing to adopt the proposed innovative techniques to enhance value of second-hand clothing products.

Recommendations

Based on the results of the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Second hand clothing retailers should acquire adequate training that will assist them to improve their skills in merchandizing by attending seminars and workshops.
2. Second hand clothing retailers especially women, should engage more in enhancing the value of the products through the adoption of the value addition techniques.
3. The products should be properly laundered before putting up for sale and value addition options should be professionally handled to compete well in the global market.

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