

Promoting Fascinator Production for Youth Unemployment in Obio Akpor

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Abstract

Fascinator's production, which is a conduit for youth employment and revenue generation through entrepreneurial skills development, has not been offered an in-depth understanding. Graduates, professionals, and brilliant youngsters in *Obio-Akpor* local government of Rivers State, Nigeria are experiencing the twin issues of unemployment and abject poverty as a result of the global economic crisis and recession. Despite Federal Government interventions through financial support through financial institutions to develop small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs), income has not risen; poverty and widespread unemployment are still major socio-economic problems. This paper argues that teaching fascinator manufacture via entrepreneurial skills, workshop participation, industrial attachment to students, and the apprentice system will provide prospects for job creation, income generation, and poverty reduction. The study uses an exploratory method and an observation instrument. It concludes that developing entrepreneurial skills through fascinator's production will inspire the *Obio Akpor* youths to be more creative, have more self-esteem, and have more influence over their lives.

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Background to the Study

A fascinator is a large decorative design connected to a comb, wire, or headband that slants on the head as a form of self-expression or to symbolize a status symbol at weddings or other social gatherings as an alternative to a hat. Sinamay, crinoline, textiles, stiffeners, glue, molds, and other materials and instruments are used in the production process. The Milliners' Association of Nigeria National (MANN) is a skill acquisition center run by private millinery companies that specialize in fascinators and hat design and manufacture. MANN's mission is to help youths living in poverty, professionals, and talented Nigerians learn fascinator acquisition skills so they may become economically self-sufficient. Entrepreneurship is a fundamental component of economic growth and development, job creation, and poverty reduction amid the global catastrophe (Unachukwu, 2009). It is no longer news that Africa's poverty and economic crisis are the greatest tragedies of our time. Unemployment among Africans has reached a catastrophic level, demanding quick action to alleviate the situation. There is a paradigm shift in the labour market right now, and even professionals from other disciplines are becoming more competitive, with fewer job prospects.

Sandeep Gupta, citing the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), said that 82.9 million Nigerians live below the poverty line of N600.00 per day and N137.430 a year due to low productivity levels despite being reputed as Africa's largest exporter of crude oil. Unemployment is the major challenge and the cause of inflation, unemployment, and insecurity in Nigeria. Consequently, to achieve the noble goals of the creative industries, which include applied arts practices, innovation, profit, and job creation through intellectual property, Florida (2002) maintains that human creativity is the ultimate economic resource, while Landry and Bianchini (1995) argue that knowledge production through creativity and innovation will become increasingly important.

Ekanem (2005) states those Nigerian government agencies and institutions since the 1970s have engaged in different entrepreneurship programs like the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS), the Small and Medium Enterprises Equity Investment Scheme (SMEEIS), and the National Open Apprenticeship Scheme (NOAS). Besides some state and local government entrepreneurial and skill acquisition efforts, the Graduate Internship Scheme (GIS), the Young Enterprise with Innovation in Nigeria (YouWIN), the Subsidy Reinvestment and Empowerment Programme (SURE-P), and others are meant to promote entrepreneurship skills, stimulate economic growth, develop local technology, and generate employment through adequate entrepreneurial and skill acquisition. Therefore, the concept of entrepreneurship development is not new in Nigeria. The Federal Government's policy on education (2004) states that the philosophy and values of education in Nigeria include the following:

1. Integration of an individual into a sound and effective citizen.
2. Respect for the work of the individual.
3. Faith in man's ability to make rational decisions.
4. Moral and spiritual values in interpersonal and human relations, social, cultural, economic, scientific, and technological progress.

Hence, the production of fascinators and hats through entrepreneurship skills acquisition and development remains one of the genuine channels to create job opportunities, reduce unemployment, and poverty, and increase wealth generation in *Obio-Akpor* local government of Rivers State, Nigeria. Therefore, it is pertinent that entrepreneurial skills should be inculcated into the basic science and technology curriculum for students. There is also a need to make substantial progress in teaching fascinator production skills through entrepreneurial development, including workshop participation, student industrial attachment, and the apprentice system.

Therefore, learning to create fascinators would generate wealth and empower the youth to be self-sufficient, self-reliant, and self-determined. Thus, the fate of nations is in the hands of entrepreneurs, who actualize and bring any nation's developmental dreams and economy to fruition. Hence, the encouragement and the development of entrepreneurship skills have the good effect of persuading a new class of fashion-conscious consumers to patronize Made-in-Nigeria fascinators and hats, thereby transforming the challenges of unemployment into business opportunities. This paper will, therefore seek to provide explanations to fascinating entrepreneurship, fascinator concept; materials and tools; methodology; entrepreneurial skills and national development; and show their relevance in employment creation, income generation and poverty reduction.

Entrepreneurship and youth Employment

Extant literature on entrepreneurship agrees on its relevance as a vehicle for economic development. Entrepreneurship, also known as small and medium companies, became popular in Nigeria in the mid-1980s and has since been a major driver of national growth. The strategic function of the entrepreneur as a social change agent is emphasized. The impact of entrepreneurs' actions on the socio-politico-economic life of Port Harcourt is extremely clear. For example, in *Obio-Akpor* local government of Rivers State, the small and medium companies' sub-sector has been expanding rapidly.

The sector employs 70% of the industrial workforce (World Bank, 1995), and the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (2008) discovered that a country's economic growth is directly proportional to its level of entrepreneurial activity. It is in recognition of the strategic role of entrepreneurs in national development that the government of Rivers State, multinational oil companies, and corporate and financial institutions continuously create an enabling environment to enhance entrepreneurship. The sector employs 70% of the industrial workforce (World Bank, 1995), and the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (2008) discovered that a country's economic growth is directly proportionate to its degree of entrepreneurial activity. Recognizing the crucial importance of entrepreneurs in national development, the Rivers State government, multi-national oil companies, learning institutions, and corporate and financial institutions are constantly establishing textile/fashion small and medium-scale cottage industries to foster entrepreneurship in *Obio-Akpor local government area in Rivers State*. According to Uhumwagho (2015), a nation is considered to be developed if its economy is diverse and its youth are economically productive.

Practically, the construction process will serve as a guide for future scholars; it will support the formation of small and medium-sized textile and fashion businesses, and it will inspire creative rekindling and entrepreneurial practice among Obio-Akpor youngsters in Rivers State and beyond. Fascinators and hatinators are traditional fashion accessories that brides, bridesmaids, mothers of the bride, and guests can wear. This is of great significance because it recognizes the role of the fascinator and hatinator, not only as an aid to memory but also as a means to prove a lifetime experience. As a result, the manufacture of fascinators and hatinators will generate employment and wealth, stimulate indigenous business, and promote entrepreneurial culture in Rivers State and Nigeria. The approach here is descriptive and narrative and relies on the practical production of fascinators to demonstrate that entrepreneurship contributes to national development through invention and creativity.

Fascinator Entrepreneurship

The term "entrepreneurship," derived from the French "entreprendre," which means "to grasp," was originally used in 1755 by Richard Cantillon, a French-born Irish economist, to meet needs and wants via innovation and successful enterprises. Entrepreneurship is characterized in a variety of ways by different academics. An entrepreneur is someone who arranges and accepts the risk of a business in exchange for a profit (Casson 2003). Allen (1991) defines an entrepreneur as a person who begins a business or maybe an enterprise with the potential for more profit or loss. Meanwhile, Onuoha (2007) asserts that entrepreneurship is the practice of starting new organizations or revitalizing mature organizations.

The creation of new businesses is generally a response to identified opportunities. These definitions indicate that entrepreneurs contribute to change through invention and creativity, allowing for the development of new markets through new and improved goods. Therefore, entrepreneurship is defined as any type of innovative function that involves the risk of adding services in exchange for financial, psychological, and social rewards, as well as rewarding activity that involves monetary and personal satisfaction through self-reliance and economic empowerment.

Fascinator

The term "fascinator" comes from the Latin fascinare (faes e ner tar), which means "to capture, enchant, bewitch, hold entranced, intrigued, or transfixed". Therefore, a fascinator refers to a lightweight fashion item or ornamental headgear worn on a slant by ladies and lavishly adorned with beautiful feathers, sequins, beads, fake flowers, and stones. In addition, a variety of embellishments are fastened to a band, headband, or hair clip that fits on the head in a unique and visually appealing manner. A fascinator, as defined by Runyan (2011), is a lace-based lightweight scarf worn by ladies as headgear, while Leger (2021) defines it as a high-society headpiece worn by females at weddings and other social events. As a result, a fascinator can be anything attached to a clip, a headband, or a comb. On the other hand, a hatinator is a head covering used for a multitude of purposes, including protection from the elements, ceremonial, religious, safety, or fashion.

Figure 1: Royal Wedding



Medium: Sinamay Fascinator
Courtesy: clickolando.com

Figure 2: Royal Wedding



Medium: Sinamay Fascinator
Courtesy: glamour .com

Hatinator is a 2010 term that combines the properties of a hat and a fascinator, incorporating a larger base or crown that is fastened on the head to achieve sturdy support in an intermediate form. Hatinators are a part of any society's social fabric. Only Western milliners produced fascinators for high-profile horse-racing events such as the Grand National, Kentucky Derby, Melbourne Cup, and Tea Party for years. (According to Wikipedia's lexicon.) In the 1960s, it was known as a fascinator, but it resurfaced in the late 1970s with greater innovation and ingenuity, and it is now worn at formal gatherings by both aristocratic and fashion-conscious females. According to Gretchen Fenson, a New York milliner, the concentration on a trim is what distinguishes it as a fascinator. Typically, the base is unnoticeable. There may be horsehair, tulle, feathers, and flowers visible.

Leonard Autie, Queen Marie Antoinette's hairdresser, designed the feather-ostrich and peacock wig in 1774 to match the queen's highly lavish clothing for King Louis XVI's coronation, and it became one of Antoinette's most well-remembered appearances. Autie developed magnificent and sophisticated master hairpieces with feathers, tulle, flowers, ribbons, flour, and other fashion accessories, ranging from 72-layered powdered masterpieces to allegorical hairstyles embellished with decorations, ornaments, and figurines that convey political and national symbolic meaning as a form of self-expression and royal rank.

Figure 3: Queen Marie Antoinette



Medium: Fascinator
Courtesy: Wikipedia

Figure 4: Woman in Flowered Hat



Medium: Straw Hat
Courtesy: Pierre-Auguste Renoir (1889)

During Kate Middleton and Prince William's wedding in the 1980s, London milliners Stephen Jones and Philips Treacy popularized fascinators by producing exquisite things for British royals and celebrities. Priyanka Chopra, Serena Williams, and Princess Beatrice continued to wear expensive and aesthetically improved things long after Prince Harry and Meghan Markle's wedding. As a result, Oleg Cassini, a well-known American fashion designer of French origin, says: *Fashion foreshadows, and elegance is a state of mind. Fashion is a reflection of the period we live in, a projection of the future, and it.*

Fashion is regarded as a component of consumer culture, as consumers define their identities via their consumption of fashion. Fashion is used as a code and a form of self-expression to communicate a social identity (Cordoso, Costa, and Novais, 2010). Identity is formed through the process of social interaction with group members and social surroundings. The visibility of the fascinator is used by socialites to communicate something about themselves to their significant others in the consumption setting (Lee, 1990). Necessarily imply that they are experts or pioneers in the fashion sector, but rather that they are conscious of their image.

Fashion-conscious customers frequently pay close attention to current trends and regularly update their collection of appealing and outstanding fascinators. However, fashion-conscious consumers do not necessarily imply that they are experts or pioneers in the fashion sector, but rather that they are aware of their appearance and make an effort to keep it in style on a regular basis (Gutman and Mills, 1982). According to Wan and Fang (2007), the pictures and style choices of celebrities or media figures have a strong influence on fashion-conscious consumers.

The fashion for fascinators is ever-changing, and nothing is stable except change! Fashion-conscious women follow fashion trends if they are in accord with the culture of the time because fashion trends are also influenced by changing culture in a certain place. As a result, many celebrities and socialites wear hats, Bishop Caps, fascinators, hair bands, Matt fascinators, Sinamay fascinators, Quinolone, and other versions of innovative disc-like and haute couture fascinators produced creatively utilizing inventive millinery materials and techniques to enhance aesthetics, social identity, and recognition.

Materials and Tools

Crinoline, sinamay, polyester, nylon, cotton, wool, buckram, linen, straw, plastic, lace, satin, velveteen, and damask are some of the materials used to make fascinators. Fascinators require the following accessories to enhance their aesthetic: petal feathers, glass crystal, stone, sequin, crystal beads, applique, comb, broach, dye, rose and silk flowers, ribbons, fishnet, fringes, wire, stiffener, paint spray, bias, mesh net, uhu gum, and other materials.

Sinamay is an eco-friendly plant-based fiber that is multifunctional, flexible, resilient, and water-resistant. 100% natural and made from the fibers of the abaca tree (banana plant) endemic to the Philippines (Warrillow, 2021). This simple weave structure, which resembles a basket weave, is stronger than cotton or silk and is readily manipulated and dyed. Various techniques crinkle, on the other hand, is a stiff fabric made from horse hair and blended with silk, linen, or cotton to be used as an interlining for fascinators or hats. These materials offer milliners infinite design possibilities. Among the tools used in the fabrication of fascinators and hats are hat blocks, fabric scissors, steam irons, sewing machines, sewing tools, dressmakers' tape, hat stands, and mannequins.

The introduction of new pliable materials and technology has improved the production procedures and finishing of fascinators. The processes for producing Sinamay fascinators are listed below.

1. A larger mold for dramatic designed fascinator was chosen for this fascinator production



2. Rub the mold with oil and wrap with nylon in order to detach easily.



3. Wet the sinamay with water to become soft for easy manipulation (Malleability).
4. Cut out two circulars 11 in same size sinamay shapes. Wrap one layer of the sinamay around the mold and add the second layer for extra coverage, strength, and volume.
5. Use tick tack to attach the outer edges sinamay unto the mold. Then stretch the sinamay on the mold, trim the rough edges and bend inward, and cut off the excess sinamay with pair of scissors.



6. Mix the stiffener with water to reduce the thickness and apply on the stretched sinamay on the mold to become strong.



7. Use masking tape to seal the wire to the required size, then insert the wire into the back of the shaped fascinator to keep it firm to hold. Uhu glue was applied to the black bias fringe around the mold base to hide the rough edges, then the fringe was pressed hard with the thumb of the fingers going around the circle to give a smooth finish.
8. Cut the correct length of the remaining sinamay into different shapes to create ribbon loops and wave designs to accentuate the base piece.



9. Apply a dot of the hot glue on the fascinator and attach four waves first, in stepping order, before attaching the four ribbon loop designs for between 10 to 15 seconds.



10. Then, a black tail that complements the ribbons and waves was attached diagonally at the back to give a fan effect. This enhances the aesthetics.



Sinamay Fascinator



Crinoline Fascinator

11. Black hairy feathers were positioned at the back to decorate and enrich other elements in the fascinator. Then, a headband is attached to the middle of the base back for a firm grip.

The concept of originality, production techniques, and manipulation of sinamay to create an appealing design, as well as the placing of decorative components together in one configuration, are all used in fascinator communication. It's impossible to imagine a world without fascinators because fascinators, hats, jewelry, handbags, and shoes are fashionable, flexible, and aesthetically complete an outfit. Women can't live without them since they highlight the wearer's style, taste, and preferences. Fashion periodicals keep customers up to date on the latest fascinator trends, patterns, outfit ideas, and shopping places. The production process indicates the value addition of fascinator production and the importance of being engaged in the industry. It is significant for self-employment, job creation, and poverty alleviation among youths in Obio Akpor local government area of Rivers State.

Conclusion

This study emphasizes the importance of millinery business skills among unemployed graduates, professionals, and *Obio Akpor* youths in Rivers State, especially as the jobless market grows every year. It claims that learning millinery skills will improve one's standard of living, promote innovation and generate wealth for the entrepreneur and other related businesses. The millinery business, just like the majority of profitable small businesses such as poultry farming, livestock farming, fashion design, catering services, and other businesses, is extremely profitable. In Nigeria, starting a fascinator and hat business is less expensive, it makes a lot of money, and the process has evolved into something rather creative, inventive, and competitive.

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