

## PROMOTING NIGERIAN TEXTILES AND FASHION THROUGH MODELLING FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT



Pamela I. Cyril-Egware PhD  
*Department of Fine Art and Design*  
*University of Port Harcourt*

### Abstract

Certain factors influence people in their choice of fabrics and clothes for diverse uses. These include aesthetics, performance and price of the clothes. They are best appreciated when displayed in full or in part, either on live models, mannequins or photographs as the case may be. This paper seeks to establish the fact that modelling will enhance and promote the value and quality of Nigerian textiles and clothing for local and international consumption. Live models are trained professionally to suit designers' requirements, while other forms of models are prepared for the same purpose. Training models otherwise called grooming is a source factor for projecting Nigeria's rich cultural heritage in textiles and fashion thereby leading to tourism, industrialization and creating employment. This has however not been identified in the Nigerian culture. Types of fashion modelling have been discussed with photographs to buttress the need for such models. Nigerian textile fabrics hung up in the market were compared with those sewn and modelled with mannequins and those worn by live models at fashion shows on the runway. The fashion shows held at the University of Port Harcourt and the world fashion Reception held in Yenagoa, Bayelsa State were analysed and compared with show room modelling to draw up the result in this research. Recommendations have been made in conclusion to emphasize the training of models in fashion schools or by apprenticeship to encourage more students in textiles and other areas to earn a living outside just the production of textiles or being idle and jobless. Nigerian textiles are in recent times patronised by foreigners. This research established the fact that textiles being a mobile art, it is best appreciated when modelled, formally or informally, and will promote tourism, industrialisation and lead to selfreliance and job creation.

**Keywords:** *Textiles, Fashion, Fashion modelling, Tourism, Industrialization, Sustainable development.*

### Background to the Study

Textiles is about the earliest form of human artistic expression which was necessitated by his environment, climate and the biblical notion of man becoming conscious of being naked and therefore needed to cover himself. Later on in the history of textiles, body adornment in the form

of clothing became fashionable, to reflect society and conform to the social norms, customs and practices of the time. This apparently led to the idea of naming cloth. Textile heritage in Nigeria is rich and colourful. They are either produced industrially or indigenously. These techniques are making vigorous and dynamic contributions to Nigerian culture in textiles and fashion. There is therefore the need to train models, formally or informally to model Nigerian textiles at fashion shows, in magazines, on television programmes and most of all Nigerians should wear their textiles to special functions, especially outside the country.

The first Textiles as identified by Gillow & Sentence (2009), fabricated by man were the manipulation of fibre with the fingers. They opined that the technique applied by the primitive man was developed in the craft of basketry which he invented. This was used to construct fabrics. The difference was in the choice of materials, as resilient and flexible fibre was used to construct fabric. Anawalt (2009), states that the prehistoric man in the Palaeolithic era discovered the manipulation of plant stems for creating long sturdy strings to create crude aprons and hats which are the earliest recognised forms of fibre based clothing. Textile design is a creative and industrial art that bridges fabric production, clothing, furnishing materials and other cloth-related areas. It is the process of creating designs and structures for knitted, woven, non-woven and surface embellishment of fabrics and accessories. Most finished products of textile design are converted into functional use. Textile design involves producing patterns for clothing, house-hold materials (such as towels) and decorative textiles such as carpets and curtains. Other uses include furnishing, industrial, automobile, hospital and laboratories textiles. Notwithstanding, the most popular uses are in the area of garments, accessories and furnishing. Clothing inform of dress design to adorn the body for diverse purposes and situations, ranging from work, play and leisure, is a major area through which textiles are appreciated better. Textile design encompasses the actual design as well as the production process. In other words, textile design is a process from the raw material to the finished product.

The concept of fashion implies a process of style change, because fashion in dress, as well as in furniture and others have taken very different forms at different times in history. Thus, when English playwright William Shakespeare observed in the sixteenth century that "the fashion wears out more apparel than the man", he meant that clothing becomes unfashionable long before it has worn out.

Clothing according to Chukueggu & Cyril-Egware, (2009), provided considerable information about the wearer, including individual personality, economic standing and even the nature of event attended by the wearer. It is the most mobile art that promote the identity of a people's culture. Green (2009), states that cloth does not speak inside the box. By implication, it is only when it is worn that it speaks both physically and metaphorically. Cyril-Egware (2012), describes dress as a foremost means in the expression of a peoples identity.

Fashion refers to a style of clothing that is accepted by a large number of people at a given time and place. It is a particular style that is popularly accepted. Fashion is a means by which people compete with one another. It is transferred from different cultures through films, magazines, newspapers, television programmes and fashion shows. Okeke (1996) described fashion as an art of shaping, making, styling, or patterning something in accordance with something admired in vogue or of prevailing custom especially in dress. This, he referred to as any method of enhancing the beauty and dignity of the human body. People follow fashion to imitate the style of a person or group with whom they identify. Therefore the use of modelling in fashion to project Nigerian textiles and fashion is a worthwhile venture. It acts as a form of nonverbal communication that provides a way for people to express their identity and values (Ndebilie & Ibeh, 2012). Through modelling of Nigerian textiles, people will appreciate the enormous roles textile design fulfils in our daily lives.

When a textile fabric is produced through weaving, dyeing, printing or other production processes, it is given a functional role, such as garment construction, costume, fashion accessories, interior decoration pieces and jewellery. The designer there after looks into ways of displaying the items for public consumption. This is where modelling comes in to advertise for aesthetics and acceptance by a large audience who takes it up then it can be regarded as fashion.

Nigerian textile fabrics are grouped into two categories: Traditional and Contemporary. The traditional textiles are those indigenous handcrafted fabrics, while the contemporary textiles are local factory made textiles including ready-made garments (Okeke, 1996). Modelling of these Nigerian textiles as fashionable garments express taste, style, status and uniqueness in existence. It also unfolds the culture, customs and order of life of its citizenry by creating a convincing picture of people's mode of dressing for different cultural activities.

#### Statement of the Problem

With the traditional setting, in Nigeria, there are certain professions that are looked down upon and those involved are tagged with unhealthy names. Modelling was one of such professions. Like theatre art, most parents will not want their children to into the profession of modelling. Currently, however, models are seen as celebrities in their own right and they have taken the front bench among recognized professions, still the culture frowns at modelling as a profession.

- 1 Modelling is not recognized & accepted as a profession in Nigeria because of cultural affiliations.
- 2 Most Nigerians do not value made in Nigeria Textiles.
- 3 Fashion in Nigeria is sometimes misunderstood to mean wrong dress ethics.
- 4 People who were involved in modelling were looked upon as irresponsible.
- 5 Those who are courageous to take modelling as a profession charge very high.

- 6 The question now is: 'How can Nigerian Textiles and Fashion be marketed nationally and internationally?'
- 7 Why is it that Nigerians do not appreciate Nigerian made textiles and modelling as a means of promoting their products?'
- 8 'How can modelling Nigerian textiles and fashion promote cultural identity, tourism, industrialisation and job creation which could lead to sustainable development?'
- 9 'Have modelling increased the demand for Nigerian textiles and fashion?'

### Objective of the Study

This paper is therefore aimed at;

- 1 Establishing the fact that modelling is an accepted profession for promoting Nigerian Textile for sustainable cultural identity and for sustainable economic development in Nigeria;
- 2 Enhancing the quality and value of Nigerian textiles and fashion through modelling to enhance tourism, industrialization and job creating for sustainable development; and
- 3 Emphasising on the need to train more models for the Nigerian textiles and fashion market.

### Significance of the study

Modelling is an entrepreneurial skill that will enhance the employment section in the Nigeria for sustainable development. An introduction of modelling of some innovative and beautiful Nigerian fabrics and garments will be popularly accepted by a large crowd and add more value to what they have and popularize them nationally and internationally, being a highly mobile art. Textiles and fashion design are the most visible means of revealing the cultural identity and environment of a people, including their political, economic, social, cultural and religious inclination. Although it is important for protection from whether condition, modelling will further boost body adornment, communication, promotion of tourism, industrialisation, job and wealth creation, preserve and promote Nigeria's cultural heritage for sustainable development. It is the most mobile art form the world over. People who wear them move locally from one place to another as well as travel by road, rail, sea and air locally and internationally making unconscious display of their attire. They are also used for cultural and traditional identity during displays at national and international shows and festivals (Cyril-Egware, 2012). To buttress this fact, Okeke (1996) in Chukweggu (1998), collaborated that Textile design have undergone several sophistication both in aesthetics and quality, and enjoy the rare privilege of being highly mobile. This has made Nigerian textiles, clothing and fashion to be highly valued in both within and outside Nigeria. It has been highly used by people of different classes, ages, sexes and races alike, from royalties and nobility to the commoners. The craft meets the society's requirement for modesty and fashion as well as expressing individual and collective tastes.

Textile design fulfils so many purposes in our lives. Collier et al (2009), identifies some of roles and contributions of textiles in our daily lives with the following examples. People use them as under sheets and blankets, slippers and robes. People wash their faces with wash cloths, dry them with towels and put on clothing for the day. They sit on upholstered seats, the vehicles move on tires reinforced with strong textile code. Hence a textile concerns everybody irrespective of age, status, race or religion. Textiles have been used to protect the body, communicate, cultural identity, for modesty (adornment) and status. Cyril-Egware (2012) noted that textiles and clothing are important in the preservation and promotion of a people's cultural heritage. When it is modelled, it communicates to the public the purpose of its production while performing its role as dress.

### Literature Review

Fashion modelling is said to have originated in the mid-nineteen century in Paris, by the first ever fashion model believed to be Marie Vernet Worth in 1892, a Parisian shop girl. She was a house model in 1853, to her husband, Charles Frederick Worth who was a fashion designer. Both of them worked in partnership with each other, but the trend towards fashion modelling did not seem to increase immensely. This was mainly because the 20th century fashion models were not seen as responsible individuals; on the other hand, modelling was not an acceptable profession. However, when Jean Patou selected only American white woman to model his clothes in 1924, this view changed. This allowed Patou's clients to identify more with his designs but more importantly allowed the model profession to become more socially acceptable in those less politically correct time. The openings of the first modelling agencies in London and the US shortly after further emphasized the acceptance of modelling as an appropriate job within society. At this time model types were also evolving and it was not just the typical tall and slender models that were being employed. Fashion designers such as Cristobal Balenciaga were using models that were deemed to be short and stocky. Also, during World War II ordinary looking and cheerful models were used because designers wanted their smiles to enlighten the mood that was present at the time.

Therefore, with all these various types of models being used the modeling industry grew in stature once again. Models started to develop into super models where they received incredible amounts of money. For example, Lisa Fossagrives, who some people claim as the first ever supermodel, appeared in numerous high fashion magazines throughout the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s. Janice Dickinson in the 1960s who is more widely respected as the first ever supermodel became the highest paid model, earning \$2,000 per day. She was on the cover of several European magazines including Vogue and Cosmopolitan that were also well established fashion magazines. During the 1960s and the 1970s more and more supermodels became apparent due to their growing popularity with society. Namely – Twiggy (London – born) and Cheryl Tiegs (Minnesota). The prominence of the supermodel era continued to grow well into the 1980s and 1990s with models such as Claudia Schiffer, Elle Macpherson, Cindy Crawford, Kate Moss and Naomi Campbell. All

of these models became the elite in the modelling industry and to some extent still are. However, at the turn of the 21st century there seems to be a slight decline in the number of high fashion models mainly due to the increased number of pop singers, actresses and other celebrities. Thus, becoming far more popular with the general public and appearing in numerous fashion magazines and advertising campaigns.

In moving into the 21st century it has also become apparent that there are greater opportunities in the modelling industry. For example, there has been a notable increase in the number of hip-hop artists throughout the world. This trend has resulted in many artists requiring hip-hop models to appear in their videos and in their merchandise. Female models, as well as male models were also becoming popular, with models such as the Swedish born – Marcus Schenkenberg. Some writers believed that he was the first ever male supermodel in the world and also the highest paid. It is also interesting that to be a model in the 21st century they did not need to have the ultra slim and slender look that is personified. For instance, if a model have an exceptional body part it is possible to only model that one distinguishing feature. Thus, the future of modelling seemed promising for all different types of individuals.

Most Nigerian textile designs are converted into garments and accessories for fashion and clothing purposes as such this paper projects the various ways such textiles can be best advertised. It is an accepted fact that this can be effective through fashion modelling. Modelling is a display of finished clothing and accessories. Other products could also be modelled to enhance their quality. This paper is however concern with promoting Nigerian textiles and fashion for tourism, industrialisation and job creation which will in turn lead to sustainable development through modelling. This paper have discussed an approach to the promotion of Nigerian textiles and fashion which include modelling garments styled in various ways depicting different cultural dress codes for sustainable development.

### Fashion Modelling

The modelling of textiles focuses on aesthetics and function but emphasis is placed on the end use. Fashion modelling involves using live models (plate 4&5), mannequins (Plate 6,7&8), magazines (plate 1,2&3), television shows and other popular avenues to show off a particular type of fashion. This allows the public to appreciate a particular fashion thereby arousing public interest. Several different types of fashion items can be displayed using fashion models. Some items that can be modelled include garments, accessories, jewellery and cosmetics. In the fashion industry, fashion modelling is often used for advertising products.

Models are often featured on the runway at fashion shows, in magazines and catalogues as well as on television and the internet. Fashion modelling involves the use of both sexes (male and female)

of different age range depending on the types of fashion to be displayed. These groups of people are known as fashion models. They are involved in wearing different garments to look pretty and attractive in a certain way (poise) as well as maintain different postures and facial expressions to market the products for the artist, fashion house or label.

The design from the textile designer gives a direct influence on the performance, durability and attractiveness of a final product which is then advertised to the public through modelling.

### Types of Fashion Modelling

There are different types of fashion modelling which include: These could be formal or informal modelling. Informal modelling is when any person wears a dress to an occasion or function. On the other hand it could be traditional attire of a people used for cultural display within or outside their home environment. Formal modelling is a situation whereby people are trained specifically as a profession to showcase the textiles and fashion of a culture, a designer's products, or for sale, for entertainment, on the fashion runway, on television or in catalogues and magazines. This paper is however concerned with formal modelling, as discussed below.

- 1 Modelling for Print: This is the most commonly recognized type of modelling. Here, models work for print media, like magazines and catalogues. They are photographed wearing different fashion clothing's and accessories. Most times, they required to hold several different poses for long periods of time.
- 2 Live Modelling: This is another popular type of fashion modelling. It often refers to the type of modelling seen during runway shows. Live models are typically required to walk and turn in front of large audiences while displaying fashion wears. Some live models may even be required to interact with certain props in their environment. (plate 5&6)
- 3 Parts Models: This involves the fashion model using certain parts of their bodies for modelling, like their hands or feet or head.

Generally, when trying to market a fashion to a certain audience, fashion designers often use fashion models that are built like or look like the intended audience. For instance plus-sized models usually model plus-sized. clothings. African models can be used to model certain fashion geared toward coloured women. Other modelling type includes:

- 1 Fit Modelling: Models who meet specific measurement requirements can be referred to as fit models.
- 2 Showroom Modelling: Different articles or fashion accessories displayed in the showroom can be referred to as showroom modelling.

- 3 **Glamour Modelling:** This involves the use of female models who are photographed wearing very few or no cloths (nudes) in order to sexually excite the person looking at the photographs. Most fashion related products are advertised by models for promotion of the products. Examples are underwear, swim wears, and lingerie etc. these models are photographed and printed in catalogues.
- 4 **Promotional Modelling:** This usually occurs at night or at weekends. The model answers questions about the service or product which include a time trade show modelling. The models are educated on the product or service and are expected to use presentation aids.

#### Promotion of Nigerian Textiles and Fashion through Modelling

Nigeria is made up of three major ethnic groups-Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo. These ethnic groups produce handcrafted textile fabrics that influence their fashion and clothing culture which include the Akwete, Asoke, Adire, Akwa ocha and Okene cloths (Eicher, 1976). These handcrafted textiles are fashioned into different kinds of clothing and fashion accessories for different purposes such as occasional, formal and casual wears. Hence the need for modelling them using different fashion modelling techniques. This will advertise, attract and promote the products for good patronage locally and internationally. Through modelling, people will be aware of the existence of such products and purchase them for use, following fashion trend, especially as it concerns Nigerian cultural identity. The local factory produced textile fabrics like Abada (wax print), georges, laces, brocades, satins and damask are either fashioned locally by fashion designers and tailors or factory sewn into different styles of garment and accessories for all ages popularly known as "readymade". This type of textiles is known as fashion and need to be modelled as prints, live on the fashion runway, in the showroom or part modelling to project Nigerian textiles and culture world-wide.

Okeke (2002), observed with dismay the true fact that the average Nigerian prefer imported textiles both sewn as garments and draped textiles to the locally designed and fashioned ones. This implies that Nigerian textiles and fashion are not well patronized may be due to poor modelling or lack of it. Nigerian textiles and fashion designers should engage the services of fashion models for modelling their products to attract greater patronage. Modelling unfolds the beauty of any product and Nigerian textiles are no exception. Once Nigerian textiles are converted to fashion in form of garment, accessories, costumes and interior decoration, in different styles to suit the culture of different ethnic groups existing in the country, modelling comes into play in order to project the existence of such tribal fashion and clothing identity. Promoting Nigerian textile through modelling in this context involves creating new styles of fashion for garments and body accessories by using made in Nigeria designed textile fabrics to produce traditional dress wears,



bags, headgears, foot wears, and jewelleryes according to cultural specification. These products are subjected to modelling using either live or artificial models (male/female or children) to advertise the existence and beauty of these items on the wearer thereby attracting patronage.

Adaptation of these made in Nigerian textiles to create styles of fashion which are modelled as traditional Nigerian dress will portray at a glance each particular ethnic group or cultural identity. Modelling of designed Nigerian textile fabrics promotes the figure of the wearer, age, social status and taste. Therefore, when modelling traditional wears or fashion associated with each tribe, there is need to use live model from that tribe in order to project accurately without bias the exact cultural background of the wearer. Igbo textile and fashion should be modelled featuring all characteristics of its culture. The same is applicable to Hausa and Yoruba textiles and fashion. By so doing, people are encouraged to patronize and promote their culture especially, fashion created for ceremonial purposes. Show room modelling can be adopted by fashion industries/houses using mannequins, while live models photographed and printed in catalogues or fashion albums be displayed for sale in the showroom along some of designed fashion styles exhibited in props.

Another means of promoting Nigerian textiles is through organizing fashion shows/exhibitions where different fashion designers meet to showcase different styles created by them for different purposes using our local fabric. The services of live models are engaged to exhibit their modelling skill to the public for them to create awareness of existence of such fabric, appreciate and patronize them; hence promotional modelling also takes place at such forum, for display of Nigerian fashions in vogue.

### Findings

Three major fashion shows held at the University of Port Harcourt proved that Nigerian textiles and fashion can be promoted through modelling. The fashion reception held in Yenagoa on the other hand also proved that modelling can create jobs for youths who are willing to be trained as professional models. Modelling will also promote tourism and industrialisation which will create job for sustainable development. Green (2009), states that cloth does not speak inside the box. By implication, it is only when it is worn that it speaks both physically and metaphorically. It is therefore clear that Nigerian textiles and fashion can only be seen appreciated and patronized when modelled in the various styles discussed in this paper.

### Prospects for Sustainable Development

The National Policy on Education (2004) in its Technology objectives centres on increasing the chances of producing the productive potentials of the Nigerian youth, thereby increasing the chances of producing better goods and services. If this is to be achieved, it is a good step in the right direction to have introduced fashion design as a course in Universities, Polytechnics, Colleges of

Educations and other fashion schools. Currently, fashion modelling could be learnt by the apprenticeship system, in fashion schools, Universities, Colleges, Polytechnics and through the media.

The National Gallery of Art (NGA) and the National Council for Arts and Culture (NCAC) are currently the art institutions in the Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Orientation that are directly related to the promotion, growth and development of Textiles and Fashion. The Ministry in collaboration with the Bayelsa State Government held an international exhibition of textile and clothing's and the World Fashion Reception, promoting the need for modelling textiles for sustainable development. An Institution of Tourism and Hospitality is currently in place in the state and the World Fashion University which was declared at the occasion is to gradually take off at the institute, With a decent background, equipped with the relevant skills, goods and services the youths will appreciate the need for development and grow to become responsible leaders. They will be self reliant, be employed by other or become employers of labour, which will in turn lead to sustainable development.

### Conclusion

Based on the above critical discussions, there is no gain saying that textile and fashion cannot fully exist without modelling. Although fashion changes like weather, modelling style will depend on the type of fashion in vogue. As far as locally produced textile fabrics are used to create traditional fashions that bear ethnical cultural identity, modelling will bring about already markets for patrons.

### Contribution to Knowledge

- 1 As an entrepreneurial skill, Textiles & Fashion is part of living and will help alleviate the current privileged, underprivileged and the Nation at large.
- 2 In the current globalized era, Textiles & Fashion have advanced nations and individuals economically, socio-culturally politically and other wise.
- 3 Through modelling people will be aware of the existence and beauty of such products and purchase them for use, following fashion trend, especially as it concerns cultural identity in Nigeria.

### Recommendation

This papers advocates that modelling with live models from similar environment, suitable for the created styles of fashion be used to promote Nigerian textile in order to enhance the quality of our products, to meet up with our traditional needs as well as project Nigerian culture to the outside world. This will make our cultural heritage be appreciated and valued by all and sundry, thereby attracting greater patronage by Nigerians at home and in Diaspora.

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## Photo Gallery



Plate 1, 2 & 3: Print Modelling Plate 4 & 5: On the run way & fashion show (Live modelling)

Plate 6, 7, 8 & 9: Mannequins' used for modelling (Show room modelling)

