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Development of Task Instruction Sheets for Couture Garment Production to Enhance Customer Satisfaction in South-East Nigeria

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Abstract

This study developed Task Instruction Sheets (TIS) for the production of couture garments aimed at enhancing customer satisfaction in South-East Nigeria. Two research questions and two null hypotheses guided the study. A Research and Development (R&D) design was adopted, and the study was conducted in public polytechnics and universities across the region. The population comprised 1,121 respondents, including 48 students, 110 Home Economics/Fashion Design and Clothing Technology lecturers, 900 registered garment producers, and 64 garment consumers. A purposive sample of 301 was drawn, consisting of 48 students, 110 lecturers, 80 garment producers, and 64 garment consumers. Data were collected using the Couture Garment Production Tasks Identification Questionnaire (CGPTIQ), validated by five experts. The instrument's reliability coefficient, established using Cronbach Alpha, was 0.79. Data were analysed using mean and standard deviation for the research questions, while t-test statistics tested the hypotheses at 0.05 significance level. Findings revealed that Clothing Technology lecturers strongly agreed on the couture garment tasks to be included in the TIS for enhancing customer satisfaction. Results further indicated no significant difference ($p > 0.499$) in the mean responses of garment producers, lecturers, and fashion design experts on tasks to be included in the TIS. However, a significant difference ($p < 0.001$) was found in their mean responses regarding the objectives of tasks in couture garment production. Pairwise analysis showed that the differences between ready-to-wear producers and technologists in Home Economics laboratories contributed most to the variation. The study concludes that TIS are essential for guiding couture garment production towards improved quality and customer satisfaction in South-East Nigeria.

Background to the Study

Garment production has advanced significantly due to technological development. It involves several well-organised steps such as laying, marking, cutting patterns, stitching, checking, finishing, pressing, and packaging. Broadly, garment production follows two approaches: mass production and couture (Yezhova, 2022). Mass production focuses on large-scale manufacturing of standardised garments using highly automated processes at low unit costs. It typically produces widely worn clothing items such as jeans and t-shirts. Conversely, couture production centres on custom-made, high-end garments, created to suit individual clients with a focus on artistry, craftsmanship, and exclusivity (Roberts, 2022; Przybyszewski, 2021). Haute couture, the most exclusive form, involves exceptional designs, fine fabrics, and meticulous craftsmanship, often considered wearable art affordable only to a few (Hughes, 2023; Ogunyemi & Udeh, 2021). Couture garments are thus one-of-a-kind creations requiring precision, multiple fittings, and long production times due to the extensive handwork and embellishments involved (Oluigbo & Okonta, 2023; Hailemariam & Gonfa, 2024).

Despite this global prestige, couture garments produced in South-East Nigeria are often of poor quality compared to imported ready-to-wear or couture garments (Burns, 2022). Studies attribute this to inadequate production methods, limited technical knowledge, shortage of skilled artisans, and minimal use of modern design tools such as digital software (Wahl, 2021; Webb, 2023). The dominance of poor designs and unskilled artisanship has led to client dissatisfaction, with garments failing in fit, durability, and overall finish (Yezhova, 2022).

To bridge this gap, advanced tools and structured methods must be introduced into couture production in the region. Previous research highlights that quality can be improved by adopting functional, structural, and decorative design methods, proper muslin draping, accurate cutting, appropriate stitching, and careful finishing techniques (Oluigbo & Okonta, 2023; Gaulithy et al., 2022). However, these advanced practices remain scarce among producers in South-East Nigeria.

One practical intervention is the use of Task Instruction Sheets (TIS). A TIS is a structured document providing step-by-step procedures for completing tasks such as designing, assembling, or finishing garments (Mok, Cheung, Wong, Leung & Fan, 2013). It clearly outlines task objectives, required materials, procedures, assessment methods, and performance criteria. Such tools have been shown to enhance learning, consistency, and efficiency in skill-based activities. When applied to couture garment production, TIS can guide producers in adhering to systematic processes that improve quality and ensure customer satisfaction (Yezhova, 2022).

Although several studies exist on garment production in Nigeria, few have focused specifically on couture garments or strategies for improving their quality in South-East Nigeria. This study therefore addresses this gap by developing Task Instruction Sheets tailored for couture garment production in the region. It further seeks to determine strategies for enhancing garment quality and meeting customer satisfaction.

Problem Statement

Couture garment producers in South-East Nigeria often experience a gap between the designer's vision and the final product delivered to customers. This challenge arises primarily from the absence of formalised, step-by-step task instruction sheets to guide the production process. According to Gaulithy, Ngomedje, Bieni, and Coste-Manière (2022), without such documents, critical aspects of production—such as accurate measurements, fabric handling, stitching techniques, and finishing details—are left to individual interpretation and memory.

This lack of structured guidance creates several problems. First, inconsistencies in garment fit, construction, and finishing frequently occur, even within the same workshop, contributing to customer dissatisfaction. Second, miscommunication or misinterpretation of design specifications often leads to costly mistakes and time-consuming reworks, thereby delaying delivery and increasing production costs. Third, the absence of a standardised workflow makes it difficult to monitor progress, identify bottlenecks, and enforce quality control at each production stage. Finally, when the final garment fails to meet customer expectations, it may result in complaints, returns, and reputational damage for producers, ultimately hindering business growth and profitability. Developing task instruction sheets could provide a practical solution by offering a clear, standardised roadmap for each stage of couture garment production. This would ensure greater accuracy, improve quality, and enhance customer satisfaction.

Research Questions

The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What couture garment tasks should be included in the task instruction sheets to ensure customer satisfaction in Nigeria?
2. What are the objectives of each task identified for couture garment production?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested at a 0.05 level of significance:

$H_0$1: There is no significant difference in the mean responses of experts (ready-to-wear garment producers, Home Economics lecturers, and Fashion Design and Clothing Technology lecturers) on the tasks to be included in couture garment task instruction sheets in South-East Nigeria.

$H_0$2: There is no significant difference among Home Economics lecturers, ready-to-wear garment producers, and Fashion Design and Clothing Technology lecturers in tertiary institutions in South-East Nigeria on the objectives of tasks in couture garment production.

Method

The study adopted a mixed-method design, combining Research and Development (R&D) with a quasi-experimental approach. The research was carried out in South-East Nigeria, covering Anambra, Enugu, Imo, Ebonyi, and Abia States. It was conducted in polytechnics, universities, and colleges of education within the region.

The study population comprised 1,121 participants, including 48 students, 110 Home Economics and Fashion Design and Clothing Technology lecturers, 900 registered garment producers, and 64 garment consumers. The garment producers consisted mainly of ready-to-wear garment makers, while the consumers were students of Home Economics or Fashion Design and Clothing Technology in higher institutions across South-East Nigeria.

A sample size of 302 respondents was selected, comprising 48 Home Economics/Fashion Design and Clothing Technology students, 110 lecturers, 80 registered garment producers, and 64 garment consumers. Purposive sampling was used to select the respondents, while simple random sampling was applied to determine the sample size within the groups.

The instrument for data collection was the *Couture Garment Production Tasks Identification Questionnaire (CGPTIQ)*, validated by five experts. Reliability was established using the Cronbach Alpha method, yielding a coefficient of 0.79. Data were analysed using mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions, while t-tests were used to test the null hypotheses at the 0.05 level of significance. Direct administration of the instrument was employed during data collection.

Results

Table 1: Mean responses of Home Economics Lecturers, ready-to-wear garment producers and Fashion Design and Clothing Technology lecturers on the couture garment tasks to be included in the task instruction sheets for the production of couture garments to meet customer satisfaction in Nigeria (n=243).

S/N	Item Statement	Mean	SD	Dec
1	Tasks in designing couture garment	4.61	.506	SA
2	Tasks in selecting fabrics for couture garment	4.43	.628	A
3	Tasks in choosing embellishments for couture garment	4.47	.547	A
4	Tasks in pattern making for couture garment	4.48	.563	A
5	Tasks in pattern laying method for couture garment	4.51	.578	SA
6	Tasks in pattern cutting process for couture garment	4.53	.584	SA
7	Tasks in assembling method for couture garment	4.51	.612	SA
8	Tasks in constructing couture garment	4.50	.612	SA
	Cluster Analysis	**4.51**	**0.58**	**SA**

Key: SD = Standard Deviation; Dec = Decision Level; SA= Strongly Agree; A = Agree, n=Number of respondents

Table 1 presents the mean responses of Home Economics lecturers, ready-to-wear garment producers, and Fashion Design and Clothing Technology lecturers on the couture garment tasks to be included in the task instruction sheets for the production of couture garments to enhance customer satisfaction in Nigeria. The results show that the respondents strongly agreed on five out of the eight identified tasks. This is evident from

their mean scores, which were 4.50 and above, the benchmark for "strongly agree." Specifically, strong agreement was recorded for items 1, 5, 6, 7, and 8, with mean and standard deviation values of (M = 4.61; SD = 0.506), (M = 4.51; SD = 0.58), (M = 4.53; SD = 0.58), (M = 4.51; SD = 0.612), and (M = 4.50; SD = 0.612), respectively.

For the remaining three tasks, respondents indicated agreement rather than strong agreement, as their mean values fell between 4.43 and 4.48, which correspond to the acceptance level for "agree." The overall cluster mean of 4.51 (SD = 0.58) clearly indicates that, on average, Home Economics lecturers, ready-to-wear garment producers, and Fashion Design and Clothing Technology lecturers strongly agreed on the couture garment tasks to be incorporated into the task instruction sheets to achieve customer satisfaction in Nigeria.

Table 2: ANOVA of the mean responses of Home Economics lecturers, ready-to-wear garment producers and Fashion Design and Clothing Technology lecturers on the couture garment tasks to be included in the task instruction sheets for the production of couture garments to meet customer satisfaction in Nigeria

	Sum of Squares	**df**	**Mean Square**	**F**	**Sig.**	**Dec**
Between Groups	7.768	2	3.884	.697	.499	NS
Within Groups	1337.129	240	5.571			
Total	1344.897	242				

Table 2 presents the ANOVA results of the mean responses of Home Economics lecturers, ready-to-wear garment producers, and Fashion Design and Clothing Technology lecturers regarding the couture garment tasks to be included in the task instruction sheets for the production of couture garments to enhance customer satisfaction in Nigeria. The analysis yielded a probability value (p = 0.499) with a corresponding F-value of 0.697. Since the probability value (0.499) is greater than the 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis—which states that there is no significant difference in the mean responses of experts (ready-to-wear garment producers, Home Economics lecturers, and Fashion Design and Clothing Technology lecturers) on the tasks to be included in the couture garment task instruction sheets in South-East Nigeria—is not rejected. This result indicates that the mean responses of the three groups do not differ significantly, implying consensus on the couture garment tasks to be incorporated into the task instruction sheets for achieving customer satisfaction.

Table 3: Mean responses Home Economics lecturers, ready-to-wear garment producers and Fashion Design and Clothing Technology lecturers on the objectives of each task identified in couture garment making (n=243).

S/N	Item statement	Mean	SD	Dec
1	Designing couture garment	4.39	.544	A
2	Selecting couture garment fabrics	4.49	.541	A
3	Choosing embellishments for couture garment	4.28	.677	A
4	Pattern making in couture garment	4.42	.647	A
5	Pattern laying method for couture garment	4.38	.587	A
6	Pattern cutting process for couture garment	4.63	.534	SA
7	Assembling method for couture garment	4.47	.577	A
8	Constructing method for couture garment	4.49	.556	A
	Cluster Analysis	**4.44**	**0.58**	**A**

Key: SD = Standard Deviation; Dec = Decision Level; SA= Strongly Agree; A = Agree, n=Number of respondents

Table 3 presents the mean responses of Home Economics lecturers, ready-to-wear garment producers, and Fashion Design and Clothing Technology lecturers on the objectives of each task identified in couture garment making. The results indicate that the respondents agreed on seven out of the eight objectives, with mean responses ranging from 4.39 to 4.49, which falls within the acceptance range for "agree." For example, agreement was recorded on items 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5, with corresponding mean and standard deviation values of (Mean = 4.39; SD = 0.544), (Mean = 4.49; SD = 0.541), (Mean = 4.28; SD = 0.677), (Mean = 4.42; SD = 0.647), and (Mean = 4.38; SD = 0.587), respectively. Conversely, respondents strongly agreed on one of the eight objectives, with a mean response of (Mean = 4.63; SD = 0.534), which meets the criterion for "strongly agree." The overall cluster mean and standard deviation (Cluster Mean = 4.44; SD = 0.58) further confirm that Home Economics lecturers, ready-to-wear garment producers, and Fashion Design and Clothing Technology lecturers generally agreed on the objectives of each task identified in couture garment making.

Table 4: ANOVA of the mean responses of Home Economics lecturers, ready-to-wear garment producers and Fashion Design and Clothing Technology lecturers in tertiary institutions in South-East Nigeria on the objectives of tasks in couture garment making.

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Dec
Between Groups	113.881	2	56.941	13.830	.000	S
Within Groups	988.119	240	4.117			
Total	1102.000	242				

Table 4 presents the ANOVA results of the mean responses of Home Economics lecturers, ready-to-wear garment producers, and Fashion Design and Clothing Technology

lecturers in tertiary institutions in South-East Nigeria on the objectives of tasks in couture garment making. The analysis shows a probability value (sig) of 0.00 with a corresponding F-value of 13.830. Since the probability value (0.00) is less than the 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis—which states that there is no significant difference among the groups—is rejected. This indicates that the mean responses of Home Economics lecturers, ready-to-wear garment producers, and Fashion Design and Clothing Technology lecturers on the objectives of tasks in couture garment making differ significantly.

Table 5: Post Hoc pairwise comparison test for the significant mean responses of Home Economics lecturers, ready-to-wear garment producers and Fashion Design and Clothing Technology lecturers in tertiary institutions in South-East Nigeria on the objectives of tasks in couture garment making.

(I) Occupation	(J) Occupation	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
Home Economics & Fashion Design and Clothing Technology Lecturer	Ready to Wear Garment producer	.639	.306	.115
	Technologists in Home Economics laboratory	-1.176*	.324	.002
Ready to Wear Garment producer	Home Economics & Fashion Design and Clothing Technology Lecturer	-.639	.306	.115
	Technologists in Home Economics laboratory	-1.816*	.348	.000
Technologists in Clothing and Textile laboratory	Home Economics & Fashion Design and Clothing Technology Lecturer	1.176*	.324	.002
	Ready to Wear Garment producer	1.816*	.348	.000

Table 5 reveals that the mean difference between ready-to-wear garment producers and technologists in the Home Economics laboratory recorded the highest positive value, indicating that this group contributed most to the significant variation in the mean responses of Home Economics and Fashion Design and Clothing Technology lecturers, ready-to-wear garment producers, and technologists in the Home Economics laboratory on the objectives of tasks in couture garment making. This was followed by the mean difference between Home Economics and Fashion Design and Clothing Technology lecturers and technologists in the Home Economics laboratory.

Discussion

Couture garment tasks to be included in task instruction sheets for customer satisfaction in Nigeria

Research Question One focused on identifying couture garment tasks to be included in task instruction sheets for the production of couture garments to meet customer satisfaction in Nigeria. The results show that Home Economics lecturers, ready-to-wear

garment producers, and Fashion Design and Clothing Technology lecturers reached a consensus on the tasks. These tasks include: fabric selection, choice of embellishments, pattern making, pattern laying, pattern cutting, assembling, and garment construction.

The test of Hypothesis One further revealed no significant difference in their mean responses, suggesting a shared understanding of essential tasks across the groups. These findings align with Giasi, Rahardja, and Anandya (2022), who identified product quality, service, and customer experience as key determinants of satisfaction. In couture, where customer expectations revolve around precision, craftsmanship, and unique design details, task instruction sheets provide a structured guide that ensures these standards are met consistently.

Objectives of Couture Garment Tasks

Research Question Two examined the objectives of each identified couture garment task. Results show that the three groups agreed on objectives such as design, fabric selection, embellishment choice, pattern making, laying, cutting, assembling, and garment construction. However, Hypothesis Two revealed significant differences in their mean responses, indicating some variation in perspectives on specific objectives.

This finding supports Shewangizaw (2023), who demonstrated that total quality management (TQM) practices improve quality and customer satisfaction in the textile sector. The agreement is logical because couture production prioritizes precision, personalization, and exceptional finishing, which naturally fosters shared objectives. Moreover, couture practices—such as careful pattern making, multiple fittings, and hand-finishing—highlight universal principles of high-quality garment construction. While couture elevates these practices, the fundamental objectives remain aligned with general garment-making standards.

Implications of the Findings

The findings have significant implications for stakeholders:

1. Lecturers in Home Economics, Fashion Design, and Clothing Technology will benefit from the consensus, as it reinforces the integration of essential couture garment tasks into teaching.
2. Students will acquire practical, industry-relevant skills that align with customer expectations for couture.
3. Garment producers can adopt standardized practices that ensure quality and customer satisfaction.
4. Curriculum planners and tertiary institutions can use the findings to harmonize training modules, fostering uniformity across institutions.
5. Government and policymakers may support this alignment by encouraging skill-based curricula tailored to industry demands.

Conclusion

The study demonstrates strong consensus among couture garment producers, lecturers, and technologists in Southeast Nigeria on the critical importance of task instruction sheets in achieving customer satisfaction. Findings indicate that detailed and standardized instructions enhance accuracy, minimize errors, and improve the quality of finished garments. Task instruction sheets are therefore not just beneficial but fundamental to the successful operation and sustainable growth of the couture garment industry in Southeast Nigeria.

Recommendations

1. **Development of Standardized Task Sheets**: Tertiary institutions should collaborate with garment producers to develop detailed, standardized task instruction sheets that specify couture techniques, quality control, and finishing standards.
2. **Curriculum Integration**: Departments of Home Economics, Fashion Design, and Clothing Technology should incorporate these agreed couture garment tasks into teaching syllabi and training modules.
3. **Quality Control Emphasis**: Rigorous quality control measures should be prioritised at every stage of couture garment production, from fabric selection to finishing, to uphold customer satisfaction in the high-end market.

Suggestions for Further Study

1. Conduct longitudinal studies to evaluate the long-term impact of task instruction sheets on garment quality and customer satisfaction.
2. Undertake qualitative studies (interviews, focus groups) with couture clients in Southeast Nigeria to explore customer expectations, drivers of satisfaction, and areas needing improvement. This will further refine task instruction sheet content.

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