

Full Length Research Paper

Aso-oke (Yoruba's hand woven textiles) usage among the youths in Lagos, Southwestern Nigeria

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Nigeria today is faced with daunting developmental challenges. This is particularly noteworthy in its manufacturing sector which is at present comatose. The textile sector is a unique subset of the comatose manufacturing sector given its employment generating potentials and its socio-cultural underpinnings in the age of globalization. Against this background, this paper engages Nigerian development predicaments through the textile industry from the perspective of *aso-oke* and the youths. These categories are selected as the focus of study for scientific and pragmatic purposes. Through qualitative research technique, this paper engages vital issues affecting the nation's textile industry adopting *aso-oke* as a case study. Results show that while the youths have unreserved capacities to drive fashion and generalized developments, they are not favourably disposed to using *aso-oke*. Reasons for this were given while the solutions were discovered. The paper concluded that the sector can be revitalized and used as tool for national development especially as it was discovered that sustainable ligaments exist among tradition, culture, consumption and manufacturing economics and national development.

Key words: *Aso-oke*, youths, Lagos, Southwestern Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

Development should be and is often the primary concern of every nation. Nigeria is in search of development as its current development indicators are issues of national and international embarrassment. For instance, poverty in Nigeria today stands at over 70% (over 98 million out of 140.354. 3 million people) (Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development 2007; Federal Government of Nigeria, 2007) as a paradox to its rich material, cultural and human resources. Several attempts have been made and are currently being made towards achieving development in the country. Current attempts include; the Seven Point Agenda of Umar Yar Adua administration, the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) and National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP). In terms of continental and global efforts, the Nigerian government is a signatory and ardent adopter of the New Economic Partnership for African Development (NEPAD) and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) policy frameworks.

The major reason for the centrality of development efforts is because it simply means 'good life'. For society

to be considered 'developed', it means the quality of life is, to a large extent, satisfactory to the average member. To be considered 'developing' is to assume or believe that the society is improving the quality of life of its members to an appreciable extent. The challenge among practitioners of development today however is how to measure and achieve development. While these tasks may be easy for some societies, they are not as easy for others.

The collapse of the socialist Russia has however somewhat makes what constitutes development and how it can be achieved discernible (Olutayo, 2002). Macro economic indicators like unemployment rate, inflation rate, exchange rates, strength of Gross Domestic Products (GDP), level of industrialization, balance of payment and state of external reserves have come to be strategic. Structural socio-cultural responsiveness to global dictates is also important. This is because socio-cultural infra-structures are the fundamentals of every development efforts especially against the homogenizing effects of globalization that corrodes needed national markets and uniqueness.

Although globalization is not entirely new, it configures new contours that have effects on specific historical, cultural, political and economic realities. It engenders

rapid expansion of commodity markets in ways that challenge nations to innovate responses based on in-depth understanding of dynamics and peculiarities if it must sustainably survive and develop. Consequences of homogenizing effects of globalization and modernization of tastes and fashion are easily observable in Nigeria with deterioration in the popularity of indigenous value system and fashion. The effect of this is seen in, among others, creation of generational vacuum that erodes (and corrupts) economies and cultural heritages. Clothes are special and unique trajectories of tastes, fashion, culture, group definitions and development. Clothes make the man, or the woman, broadcast information about socio-economic categories, personality, values, mores and aesthetics (McQuaid, 2006). Global political economic intricacies reveal that clothes are also used to promote socio-cultural and political agenda as was the case in the 1920s when the Soviet Union's designers used clothes, pillow cases and even upholstery to promote and defend communist agenda (McQuaid, 2006). Contemporary case in point is the near ubiquitousness of jeans, T-shirts and baseball shirts which originated from the United States of America with associated names like Levi's Straus. Forms and definitions of clothes in Nigeria are however in constant flux.

The Nigerian textile industry was hitherto the third largest in Africa after Egypt's and South Africa's and was among the largest employers of labour in the country. The industry is today witnessing great depression and national consensus in that it must be revived as a key aspect of the comatose manufacturing sector and sad de-industrialization - if Nigeria is to develop and improve the quality of lives of its people. Challenges facing the Nigerian textile industry have been variously linked with smuggling of imported textiles into the country, high cost of production, weak exchange rates, energy crises and very low patronage amongst others. Of all the popular reasons often adduced for dismal performance of the industry, none considered the dynamics of forms, definitions, demographics and generalized constructions of clothes in Nigeria. Worse still, none of the solutions often proffered considered the above dynamics. This is not surprising as faulty diagnoses of problems will ultimately generate faulty prognoses. Nigerian textiles industry today operates below average capacity. The below capacity utilization followed a clear trend. For example, the National Average Manufacturing Capacity Utilisation Rates of the industry consistently declined from as high as 79.7% in 1975 to 48% at the second half of 2005 (Central Bank of Nigeria, 2005). This mirrored the process of demographic changes and modernization in Nigeria.

Aso-oke: Background considerations and the youths interface

Worst hit of the textile manufacturing sector is the *aso-*

oke (What is called *Aso-oke* in this study is also known as *Aso-ofi*. It is made principally by the Yoruba people of Oke ogun area of the present Oyo State). In the late 19th and 20th centuries, people from that area were referred to by Lagosians as 'Ara Oke' (people from Oke ogun or from the hinterland of Yoruba land). This nomenclature is attached to the clothe they make and brought to Lagos for commercial purpose i.e. *Aso awon Ara Oke* (clothe of the people from the hinterland). It is called *Aso ofi* because of the process through which it is made particularly the implements. 'Aso' in Yoruba means 'clothe' in English while 'ofi' is 'loom' with which this type of clothe is woven. Yorubas have a tendency of relating the name of an object to its origin, the process that produces it or what it is used for. In this case, they adopt the instrument that produces the clothe, *ofi*. We have decided to adopt the other and common name, *aso-oke*, in this study because it is the more popular name the clothe is currently called in Lagos especially among the youths. The name *Aso-Ofi* is certainly a rare name for the clothe today. *Aso-oke* is usually worn by Yoruba men and women throughout southwestern Nigeria which basically include contemporary Ekiti, Oyo, Ogun, Osun and Lagos states. Yoruba stocks in parts of Kwara, Kogi and Edo States too wear this type of clothe. Common fashion styles often used *aso-oke* for are *buba* and *iro* (top and wrapper), *gele* (head gear), *agbada* (large gown) and *buba and sokoto* (top and trousers) (National Museums, Liverpool, 2008). The process of manufacturing *aso-oke* has been well documented (Asakitipi, 2007; Ojo, 2007; Renne, 1997; Renne, 1992; Poynor, 1980; Bray, 1969; Bray, 1968; Clarke, 1938 and Murray, 1936) and the consensus is that it followed a well orchestrated pattern while its usage is laced with honour and finesse.

The focus on *aso-oke* as a sub-category of the textile industry has a unique, salient and strategic capacities of demonstrating importance of inter-firm integration strategy necessary for sustainable industrial and entrepreneurial growth. The suitability and workability of this model has been shown in the case of metal manufacturing sector of Spain (Fernandez-Perez, 2003). *Aso-oke* is a major artifact among the Yorubas and it is a form of identity that links generations of the Yoruba race. Besides its cultural imports, *aso-oke* provides employment for both men and women in Yoruba communities. Its occupational engagements transcend age, gender and status. Right from the raw materials to the ultimate consumption, its compatibility with the local environments is noteworthy making it a sustainable and veritable tool for national development.

Although Agbadudu and Ogunrin (2006) after their study in Benin City maintained that *aso-oke* has enjoyed 'sustained' and 'continuous acceptance', extended observation of events in Lagos however suggest otherwise as *aso-oke* has waned in popularity and usage particularly, among the youths who are at least one third of the Nigerian population as well as the most vibrant structure.

This paper contends that *aso-oke* is, at best, surviving

at the margins. Hence, the focus of this study is scientific and pragmatic. For, these youths are a veritable resource for manufacturing, marketing and consumption. They are vital agents of fashion change and innovation while their effective demands for satisfactory consumer products are noteworthy. The youths are the trend setters, national identity ambassadors and the future. Urbanization and rurality are commonly linked with differentials in textile usage and fashion trends. The simplistic dichotomy is to view much of rural dwellers as conservative in their textile usage while urban dwellers are more disposed to western type textiles. This is however not the case in Nigeria as the line between that which is rural and urban is becoming very thin due to sporadic and unmitigated rural-urban migrations, return migrations, rural electrification, increased rural access to information technology and remittances. Nonetheless, urban dwellers, particularly the youths, set the trend because they are the information and fashion gatekeepers into the country.

Right from music to textile, urban youths set the tone for directions of tastes and fashion. They determine what is dead and what is alive in fashion. Even when the elderly attempt to 'moderate', the youths have the capacity to influence even the elders in a manner akin to the notion of 'rebellious youths' who stampeded both colonial authorities and the elders in Africa (Waller, 2006). A common method the youths often adopt to 'silence' the elder in terms of fashion is through reference to them as 'old school'. Terms which elders often consider derogatory as it signals generational disconnect. Taste and fashion concerns are tied to maturity and the danger here is for fashion artifacts to be segmented. This segmentation often militates against popular acceptance and usage. This in turn adversely affects productions, sales, marketing, profit margins, employment and overall national development. Ironically, the youths can be annexed as custodians of indigenous cultures and artifacts.

The time is thus ripe for the inclusion of youths in policies and institutional strengthening against globally acknowledged demographic pressures and the need to ensure appropriate investments that are critical to generations (Lam, 2007). In line with this position, Puri (2007), Lam (2007), McDowell (2007) and The World Bank (2006) maintained that one of the greatest opportunities the world faces today is the "youth bulge". The opportunities however come with challenges but the opportunities can be productively optimized and the challenges managed to promote growth and development of the youths and the society at large. This is particularly important especially as the "youth bulge" is expected to continue growing for several more decades in Africa while that of most of Asia and Latin America are at the peak (Lam, 2007). In efforts to revive the *aso-oke* and the totality of Nigerian textile industry therefore, the youths must be recognized and annexed as sustainable human capital. This paper addresses the issues raised above in a way that generate new discourse and insights about

aso-oke, fashion and textile in Nigeria.

Description of the study process

The study setting was Lagos, Southwestern Nigeria. Lagos state was created on May 27th, 1967 by the State (Creation and Transitional Provisions) Decree No 14 of 1967 which carved out 12 states of the prevailing 4 regions. The state did not however take administrative entity until May 1st, 1968 with the enactment of Administrative Divisions (Establishment) Edicts No.3 of 1968 (International Business Link, 1998; African Newspapers of Nigeria and Lagos State Government of Nigeria, 1999). The state is the most economically vibrant and buoyant state in the country due to its sociopolitical history, demographic compositions and unique geographic positioning. Lagos state is consequently, popularly, regarded as the Nigeria's industrial and commercial nerve centre/capital while the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja (The official capital of Nigeria) is only often referred to as the political and administrative headquarters of the nation. Importantly also, the trend of urbanization, economic vibrancy and demographic peculiarities of Lagos has officially qualified it as an emerging Mega City. Hence, regardless of its spatial deficiency, the state is the most urbanized in Nigeria with about 1,712 persons per square kilometer compared to just about 27 persons per square kilometer in Taraba State (Federal Government of Nigeria, 2004). Lagos has an official population of 9.013534 million according to 2006 Population and Housing Census (Federal Government of Nigeria, 2007) but is estimated to be actually inhabited by, at least, 15 million people (Owasanoye, 2008). Lagos is the fastest growing city in Nigeria and Africa with relatively high youthful, ambitious and educated population and other community characteristics that set the trend of tastes and fashion in Nigeria.

Most standard fashion outfits, practitioners, media houses and shows are either based or organized in Lagos. Also, most entertainment 'stars'/celebrities live in Lagos. For those who did not start their fashion and entertainment careers in Lagos, immediately they hit the limelight, most of them relocate to Lagos because of the knowledge that the vibrant, entertainment and fashion-conscious youths, who are the target audience and fans, are based in Lagos. Cases abound but examples include Plantashun Boys, Two face Idibia, Olu maintain, Zaki amongst others. Respondents were sampled and interviewed in Lagos. The interview schedules were in locations of respondents' choice. The ultimate prerequisite for inclusion in the study was 'youth criterion'. All the people included in the study were therefore Yoruba, single and trendy youths. Due to the subject of study (*aso-oke*) that has lots of traditional/sociocultural embellishments and in order to be able to sufficiently explore relevant issues,

qualitative method was particularly chosen for this study. Thus, in-depth interviews and extended multi-sited observations were employed in the primary data collection process. Secondary data were also used. Data from in-depth interviews, observations and secondary sources were transcribed, carefully sorted, analyzed and reported using ethnographic summaries and content analysis. These were later examined to ensure that research objectives were addressed. As a result, responses from every respondent and material within the methods were used in the final analysis on the merit of their pattern representations and relevance to the research objectives.

Data presentation and discussion of findings

Knowledge and perception of *aso-oke*: It is believed that the knowledge and perception of *aso-oke* among the youths have bearings with eventual usage decisions. As such, the study opened with the objective of capturing knowledge and perception matrixes among the youths. Basically, all the respondents have some knowledge of *aso-oke*. Perception of the attire is however less positive. According to a respondent:

I know it (*aso-oke*). They use it for olden days not for now. Not common for now.

(IDI (IDI as used in this study means In-Depth Interview method of data collection which was used during data collection for the research) /Youth/Lagos).

Hence:

It is a type of cloth. It is an olden days cloth inherited from our forefathers as a Yoruba.

(IDI/Youth/Lagos).

For another:

It is traditional attire. People do not normally use it again. It is not in vogue. Not like before. Even for special occasions, people don't use it again. It has gone out of fashion. Anyone that wears it just wears it. People don't wear it again. People don't wear it as before. It is out of fashion. It is not in vogue.

(IDI/Youth/Lagos).

One put it succinctly:

I don't like it.

(IDI/Youth/Lagos).

The distribution of these responses shows, largely, a negative perception. Perception that links *aso-oke* with the past, thus strange for today's fashion environment.

Possession and usage of *aso-oke*

From the pattern of responses on knowledge and perception of *aso-oke* above, discoveries on possession and

usage is not surprising. Results of extended observations of the youths fashion trend suggest that the usage of *aso-oke* is rare. The few people who use it do so on special events and they are normally the older generations. There is consistency in data between the results of observations and in-dept interviews.

I don't have *aso-oke*. I don't wear it at all. I don't even wear it to parties.

(IDI/Youth/Lagos).

A respondent gave detailed explanation based on real case:

I don't have any but my daddy has. I am from Ondo and the old people value it a little there. When my mummy died they made it compulsory for us to wear it as *aso-ebi* (family attire). Because I did not have any, I had to borrow from one old man to use just for that day.

(IDI/Youth/Lagos).

In a related fashion, a respondent maintained that:

I have just two in my wardrobe. I wear them only when I am going out for special occasions because I believe they are only meant for that. Not something I wear to work or regular situations.

(IDI/Youth/Lagos).

For one:

I don't wear it.

(IDI/Youth/Lagos).

Me! I don't like it. I can never wear it. I saw it on people long ago.

(IDI/Youth/Lagos).

A respondent gave an insightful account of her position on the subject:

I don't have any. Hardly do you see young girls, singles having such attires. You don't see people buy *aso-oke* again now. I don't wear them. I don't love to wear them because it is not in vogue. But when it is in vogue, I will wear it.

(IDI/Youth/Lagos).

Relatedly, a respondent opined that:

I don't wear it now. It is not in vogue. For instance, if you wear *aso-oke* to school, they (school mates) will wonder...I wish to have one some day because it is a pride of the Yorubas.

(IDI/Youth/Lagos).

For yet another:

I don't have. No. I don't wear it at all. People don't wear it anymore. I don't see people wear it. I don't like it.

(IDI/Youth/Lagos).

Comparison between *aso-oke* and another indigenous textile: The *Ankara* (printed wax) experience

Ankara shares some basic attributes with *aso-oke*. Although *Ankara*, was largely imported to Nigeria since its own textile industry ran down, new *Ankara* making industries are re-emerging due to renewed interests in the fabric. Largely, *Ankara* is also a fancied local textile and was at a time out of fashion. Unlike *aso-oke* however, it is currently enjoying huge patronage across socioeconomic and demographic divides. Results of our observations reveal that *Ankara* is the vogue in Yorubaland in terms of traditional attire. It is worn on both normal and special occasions. It is currently worn on campuses, market places and special events. *Ankara* usage is best described as 'for anytime, anywhere, anyhow'. An important note however is that, the immediate past president of Nigeria, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo (a Yoruba man) played a crucial role in the revitalization of *ankara* and few local fabrics. This was done in three ways. First, by making the usage of local products a matter of policy. And more importantly, he was always wearing Yoruba traditional textiles especially *Adire* and *Kampala* which he tailored in various styles and used them for various occasions in and outside the country. *Adire* and *Kampala* were indigenous and were almost exclusively to the south western Nigeria - Abeokuta in the Yorubaland, from where president Obasanjo hails. Thirdly, while the president did not openly fancied *Ankara*, he did encourage its usage through admiration as often worn by his Minister of Finance then (Mrs. Okonjo Iweala), among others. The president thus, was a model who was always on the media and fashion consciousness of the people. Hence, *Ankara* is lighter and enjoys the endearment of fashion designers who use it for various styles and mixtures that have the capacity to attract the youths. To sufficiently and primarily comprehend the dynamics of traditional attire usage in this era of globalization therefore, interviewed youths were asked to state their respective positions on the two textiles. There was unanimity in their responses. A few of the responses are as follow:

Ankara is more favoured now because it is what people use for *aso-ebi* (family attire during celebrations) . Fashion favours *Ankara* now. *Ankara* can be worn in different forms. It is trendier. You can use it for variety. You can mix it with *oganza*. *Ankara* can be everyday wear but not *aso-oke*. (IDI/Youth/Lagos).

For another youth:

Ankara is what is in vogue now. Definitely people go for what is in town. *Ankara* is in vogue. (IDI/Youth/Lagos).

For a respondent:

Ankara is everywhere. People are using it. I think part of the reasons is that *Ankara* is traditional but trendier and cheaper than *aso-oke*. (IDI/Youth/Lagos).

Comparison between *aso-oke* and foreign textiles: the case of jeans and T-shirts

It is a fact that jeans, T- shirts and other western textiles enjoy popular patronage and usage among the youths in Lagos today. A minute drive or trek on the streets of Lagos is enough to make visitors come to terms with this fact. Campuses and streets are 'littered' with the usage of foreign clothes especially jeans materials. Interestingly, the usage also cuts across economic and educational backgrounds. To gain an insight into why or how this is so, some youths were interviewed. Here are samples of their responses comparing *Aso-oke* (*aso-ofi*) with Jeans and T-shirts.

One puts it thus:

You can not compare them. Jeans and T-shirts are 'knock about' (cloths or materials you can wear at anytime without special treatments or reservation for special occasions). You can not compare them. If you go to peoples' wardrobes, you won't see *aso-oke* there but you will see jeans a lot in their wardrobes. I have never seen anyone with all *aso-oke*. *Ooru maa fere mu pa* (the person will nearly suffocate). *Aso-oke* is not comfortable. *Ko wa comfortable* (it is not comfortable). People wear jeans everywhere. (IDI/Youth/Lagos).

Sharply, a respondent captured it this way:

Jeans and T- shirts would still be preferred because they are everyday wear. When you wear things everyday, you tend to favour it. (IDI/Youth/Lagos).

I prefer jeans because the material is very thick and is lasting. People prefer jeans because it is also a modern world because people think jeans is more acceptable than *aso-oke*. At least 85 percent (mental statistics given to show emphasis and popular usage) is wearing jeans. Even ladies. They believe jeans is it (the vogue). Everybody wants to use it. (IDI/Youth/Lagos).

According to another youth:

Jeans can be washed but not *aso-oke*. Jeans is easier to wash. Jeans is not our dress but we use it more because of its smartness. (IDI/Youth/Lagos).

Accounting for the non-usage of Aso-oke among the youths in Lagos

From the distribution of responses, it is deducible that *aso-oke* is not popular within the fashion matrix of the youths. An attempt was made to explore reasons for this. Patterns of responses reveal a potpourri of factors that were informative. Popular reasons given by the youths about their unimpressive level of usage of *aso-oke* are heaviness, expensiveness, colour vastness, obsolescence, lack of/insufficient advertisements and outright negative sentiments based on weak textile knowledge. While some of these findings -heaviness and colour vastness/variety for example - are not new, together with others, they shed new lights on the current fate of the artifact. Particularly and interestingly, among other factors, the youths are emphatic on the place of awareness and advertisements in setting vogue and fashion. The lack of sufficient advertisements of *aso-oke* in the media could therefore be, as it stands, held responsible as an overarching influence on the attitude of the youths.

According to a respondent:

It (*aso-oke*) is too heavy. In this sunny weather, it is impossible to wear it. Some *aso-oke* are very expensive as I was told. It is not easy to wash. The washing is more difficult. My father gives it to specialists. There is none (*aso-oke* drycleaners) in Lagos to help one wash. That discourages. They may collect higher price. It is not something that is like other clothes. (IDI/Youth/Lagos).

It is expensive. More expensive than jeans. It is not comfortable. (IDI/Youth/Lagos).

For another:

It is too heavy. I don't even wear it to parties. (IDI/Youth/Lagos).

For me, it does not have problems, I just believe it is for olden days. I have never worn it so I don't know whether it is heavy or light. (IDI/Youth/Lagos).

One respondent gave insightful and pragmatic reasons:

Aso-oke is not trendy. If it is very trendy like *Ankara* it will be used. Before now, people don't use to wear *Ankara* but is now very trendy. Our fashion designers are now making it more fashionable. If they can mix it up and people begin to see that it is trendy. If the fashion designers can help to spice it up. Trendy looking, mixing it with *adire*, *satın lace* like they are doing with *Ankara* now. Not just tying it around the waist or something.

(IDI/Youth/Lagos).

Advertisement as a tool for influencing taste and fashion among youths

Advertisement is a major factor that influences tastes and high volumes of sales (BBC News, 2007; Young, 2003a; 2003b; Cox, n.d). The role of advertising is to condition consumers to consider and feel favourably disposed when brands are mentioned which ultimately induce purchase and usage (Ogbulogo, 2004; Nagle and Holden, 1995; 1985; Leeds, 1991; Lancaster and Massingham, 1988). Advertising is used to increase consumers' knowledge about the benefits of the brands, prices, establish, maintain and improve corporate image. The efficacy of advertisements, especially television, as powerful socialization institution on children and youths have been well documented (Stroman, 1984). This is why major brand manufacturers spend a fortune to maintain and improve their market shares. It hardly could be otherwise considering that advertising has been adjudged a 'powerful stuff' in customers' conditioning to taste (Cox, n.d). While television is often favoured because it has the capacity to generate as many sales as possible in the minimum amount of time, the objectives of using television are usually short term in nature and consumers are aggressively urged to act upon needs of which they are already aware (Lancaster and Massingham, 1988). Due to the transient nature of television commercials however, other means are used to complement their ephemeral effects. The other means include posters, newspapers, billboards, handbills, radio, souvenirs, fashion parades and related shows. They are in totality to influence attitudes and create awareness about products and services, act as reminders, motivate enquiries, provide leads for the sales force, for price and market segmentation (Ogbulogo, 2004; Nagle and Holden, 1987; 1995; Lancaster and Massingham, 1988).

An average consumer is thereby bombarded from different dimensions that predispose him/her to purchase even when s/he does not need to (impulse buying) . This is particularly true in the case of youths who have been documented to be easily influenced by advertisements especially when they resonate group ethos, laced with class and peers' conditioning which results in their adoption of fashion. Hence, Young (2003a; 2003b) maintained that as powerful as advertisements are, attitudes and tastes are largely conditioned by the socialization process via family and friends. Young (2003a; 2003b) outlined the nature of advertising as a secondary influence on brand choice against the background of an established set of preferences and choices ultimately set by the milieu of interplay of culture and tradition perpetuated through socialization process. It is noteworthy that Young's position have merits especially in relation to *aso-oke*, taste and fashion in Nigeria because perceptions of

advertisements are predicated upon the value of society since the values determine what is 'desirable' and what is not. Linking advertisements with traditions, culture, group ethos and family value system thus become important.

The definition of tastes and fashion are culture predetermined as a fashionable person in a culture may not be so seen in another. This fact is not unappreciated in a multiethnic and multicultural society like Nigeria. Advertisers recognize the imports of cultural ethos manipulations as they often manipulate cultural peculiarities to suit their purposes. They do this by a way of inducing targeted audience to develop tastes and cravings for their (advertiser's) products. (Sometimes, they do this into so much excess that government intervenes not even mind-ing revenue being generated from them in form of taxes.

As important as awareness and advertisements are in conditioning tastes and fashion, observations reveal that *aso-oke* has not enjoyed sufficient coverage in Nigerian media. Its socioeconomic potentials have not been well contextualized within the present national development efforts. *Ankara* has fared better in this regard and the results are expressly observable in the level of patronage and usage even among the youths. *Aso-oke* is seldom reported in the media. Even when they are, it is in form of cultural festivals and tourism. They are televised as antiques. Historical elements that may not be in need of necessary invocation for contemporary economic development. It is therefore less surprising that *aso-oke* enjoys more popularity at local and foreign museums rather than in the markets, stalls and bodies. Data from the interviews conducted confirm the results of observations. For example, according to a youth:

I don't have *aso-oke* only *Ankara*. I don't wear it at all. We are not called to it. The marketing is not tangible enough. People don't know about it. They only hear about it. Some can't even identify it until you tell them. (IDI/Youth/Lagos).

For another:

Awareness is also very important. Tell people about the value. The oyinbos (westerners) advertise their own but here we do not. May be it is because we do not appreciate it. Tell people to buy. To encourage them, give them discounts. (IDI/Youth/Lagos).

For yet another:

It is because of advert. A lot of advertisements. Let them advertise it more. Bonanza too; so that people will be drawn to it. Things you don't see, you don't know much about and consequently you don't use. And, until you use/taste it you can not access it. My people will say *oju ko lati n mo obe to ni maggi afi ba ba bula n be* (a Yoruba proverb meaning until one uses a particular product, eva-

luating it becomes impossible). Peoples' attention must be drawn to it. (IDI/Youth/Lagos).

Potential attraction to *aso-oke*

For pragmatic and scientific understanding of development capacities of *aso-oke* from the foregoing, the youths were asked to comment on *aso-oke* among their cohort. Their responses suggest that there is hope for the textile if appropriate actions are taken on time. Moreover, the comments are largely consistent with various responses that have been given on other vital issues already raised across sections in this paper. For instance, a respondent opined that:

If they can redesign *aso-oke*, people may use it more. It is good. I love it. It is the pride of Yoruba heritage. I like something that is cultural. (IDI/Youth/Lagos).

According to another youth,

I love tradition. The government should encourage people to back up tradition. As leaders, they are in the best position to promote this project. They have the opportunities. Parents too should encourage kids to wear traditional clothes. (IDI/Youth/Lagos).

One maintained that:

Aso-oke is very beautiful, fine. As a lady, it has the capacity to make you look gorgeous if it is made trendy and spiced up by the fashion designer who sews it. (IDI/Youth/Lagos).

Aso-oke is about our origin and is part of the Yoruba culture. So it should not be ignored into extinction. (IDI/Youth/Lagos).

Conclusion and Implications for Policy

This paper has given fresh insights into the fate of *aso-oke* among youths in contemporary Yorubaland of southwestern Nigeria. The focus has been to scientifically capture the totality of youths' disposition. The findings have shown that *aso-oke* is not popularly used among the youths of Lagos and by extension, other parts of Yorubaland. Various reasons have been given by the youths themselves as shown above. Policies should therefore target the issues that have been thrown up in this study. A fact that is noteworthy is that the textile can be resuscitated as already shown in the case of *Ankara*. The role of advertisements must however be well infused

into policy and manufacturing efforts geared towards revitalizing *aso-oke* and the totality of Nigerian textile industry. Comprehensive advertisements, jingles, modeling and other necessary marketing activities that can appeal to youths must be engaged in the Nigerian textile *renaissance*. The socio-cultural imports of *aso-oke* make commercial sense as advertisements and designs can be woven around them especially as the youths do not have anything against indigenous cultures and traditions even though they have strong affinity for foreign taste and fashion as shown in their popular usage of jeans and T-shirts as well as consumption of fast food (Olutayo and Akanle, 2009). There are therefore sustainable correlates or nexus between tradition, culture, consumption, manufacturing economics and national development. Exploiting the development potentials of this indigenous textile is crucial particularly now that endogenous solutions are being advocated (Juma, 2006) for development challenges facing the continent, and the nation in particular. We hope that we have been able to galvanise thoughts and interests in this regard through this study.

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