
ADIRE TEXTILE: A CULTURAL HERITAGE AND ENTREPRENEURIAL CRAFT IN EGBALAND, NIGERIA

Saheed, Zakaree S. (Ph.D)

Department of Economics and Management Sciences
Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences
Nigerian Defence Academy, Kaduna
Nigeria.

Abstract: *Nigerian multi-ethnic and diverse culture, gives a lot of value to its arts, which primarily include ivory carving, grass weaving, wood carving, leather and calabash, pottery, painting, cloth weaving, glass and metal works. Perhaps more than any form of art, the art of cloth (Adire) making reflects the culture from which they come. The art's value (Adire making) has certainly been developed over a long period of time, only time make it stronger as it passes from generation to generation. Adire textiles which, is the indigo dyed cloth is an integral part of the culture and cultural heritage of the people of Egba kingdom in south western Nigeria. It is the major local craft by the women who use a variety of resist dye techniques in their entrepreneurial and artistic efforts, to produce various design of adire textile for both the local and national market. Using survey and questionnaire, this paper therefore traces the evolution of traditional Adire production and its uses among the people of Egbaland in Ogun state and Nigeria as a whole, and as a spring that supplies different vocations like designers, pattern makers, dryers, tie and dye experts, cloth and brocade sellers, merchandisers, distributors, oloolu (local ironers) and other related menial jobs. Thus, this study attempts to examine the impact of Adire textile as a cultural heritage on entrepreneurial development in Ogun state, Nigeria. Findings reveal that adire making has undergone innovation which has helped in creating incremental wealth and generate employment for the people. Based on these findings, policy recommendations were made to the government to support people in this sector through provision of credit facilities to enable them expand their capacity through the use of modern equipment. Moreso, the art of adire making should be introduced into the academic curriculum in colleges, to enable interested students have adequate knowledge right from school.*

Keywords: Cultural Heritage, Entrepreneurial Craft, Adire Textile and Egbaland

1.0 Background Information

Culture is essentially the way of life of a people, which generates assets such as skills, products, expression, and insight that contribute to the social and economic well being of the community. This can be seen in the people predominating attitudes, norms, behaviors, beliefs, value, art, craft, heritage and creative activities that characterize the functioning of a people, with respect to their inherent power to generate value by leveraging other production variables for creating incremental wealth through the use of resources at hand, which later translate into a cultural heritage that is passed on from one generation to another.

Culture in Nigeria is most positively multi-ethnic, and it gives a lot of value to different types of arts, which primarily include ivory carving, grass weaving, wood carving, leather and calabash, pottery, painting, glass and metal works, and cloth weaving (textile). Perhaps more than any form of these arts, *adire* textile, which is common among the people of Egbaland in Ogun State of Nigeria, reflects the culture from which they come (Tomori, 2011).

The Egba nation has its capital city as Abeokuta, which is also the capital of today's Ogun State, South-West Nigeria. It is strategically located on the Ogun river, 78km north of Lagos and 70km from the ancient city of Ibadan.

Abeokuta is an agro-based market with small and middle level agro industries. The people produce agricultural products such as yams, cassava, rice, corn, palm oil, poultry, cottons and vegetables. It also serves as an exporting point for cocoa, palm produce and kolanuts. Although, cotton was introduced by the Missionaries in the 1850's, Cotton weaving, pottery and tie and dye (Adire) are all traditional crafts of the Abeokuta people (Inside Watch Africa, 2012). The city is reputed to be the capital of the adire industry in Nigeria.

Adire textile is a resist-dyed cloth produced and worn by the Yoruba people of southwestern Nigeria in West

Africa. The Yoruba label *adire*, which means “tied and dyed,” was first applied to indigo-dyed cloth decorated with resist patterns around the turn of the twentieth century. With the introduction of a broader color palette of imported synthetic dyes in the second half of the twentieth century, the label “*adire*” was expanded to include a variety of hand-dyed textiles using wax resist batik methods to produce patterned cloth in a dazzling array of dye tints and hues (Wikipedia, 2008).

Not until recent time, the business of *adire* textile production, like other entrepreneurship which is a dynamic process of creating incremental wealth by individual through the use of resources at hand (Muhammed, 2001), is assumed to be inborn inherited by birth, and the heritage passed on to the children from the parents whose parents were also involved in the production process. The craft was formerly known to be a family business in Egbaland, passed from parents to their female children and their male children wives. According to Octarian Mulikat of Jojolola’s compound in an oral interview, as cited by Tomori (2011), people who are not member of the Jojolola family (the first family believed to produce *adire* in Egbaland) were not allowed to learn the *Adire* business because it form an integral part of the family heritage. However, with a new period of innovation in handcrafted cloth production in Yorubaland in the 1960s, and the growing availability of chemical dyes from Europe, which introduces a revolution in color and techniques (Wikipedia, 2008), and the entrants of the Nigerian fashion designers who adapt the designs to print high-quality cloth using imported color-fast dyes in colors other than indigo, the *adire* textile gradually transformed into an innovative entrepreneurial craft.

Given the foregoing, this paper proposes to critically examine and/or analyse:

- i. The origin and evolution of *adire* textile in Egbaland, Nigeria.
- ii. The process of making *adire* textile in Egbaland
- iii. The Economic Effect of *Adire* textile to the people of Egbaland

Given these objectives, the challenge of this paper is focused on *adire* textile as a cultural heritage and entrepreneurial skill to the people of Egbaland in Ogun State of Nigeria, and subsequently the transformation of the traditional craft into an innovative entrepreneurship. To this end, the paper is organized into five sections. Following this introduction is section II, which focuses on the origin and evolution of *adire* textile in Egbaland. Section III discusses the methodology. Section IV analyses and interprets the data on the economic effect of the craft, collected through questionnaire and interview, while section V summarises the findings and offer some policy recommendations.

2.1 The Origin and Evolution of *Adire* Textile in Egbaland



Source: African Textile Gallery

The *Adire* was first produced in Jojola’s compound of *Kemta*, Abeokuta by Chief Mrs. Miniya Jojolola Soetan, the second *Iyalode* (Head of Women) of *Egba land*, and later passed the process to her children and onward to the future generations. *Adire* production was formerly known to be a family business passed from parents to their female children and their male children wives. The first *Adire* material was made with *Teru* (local white

attire) and *Elu* (local Dye) made from *elu* leaf which is planted in the Saki area of Oyo state (Tomori, 2011). Traditional process used in the production is similar to those inherited from the older generation, which makes the art a routine entrepreneurship. According to Yuyun (2007), the routine entrepreneurs are those who produce the same product using traditional processes similar to those existing in the market.

As a distinctive textile type, adire first emerged in the city of Abeokuta, a center for cotton production, weaving, and indigo-dyeing in the nineteenth century. The prototype was tie-dyed *kijipa*, a handwoven cloth dyed with indigo for use as wrappers and covering cloths. Female specialists dyed yarns and cloth, and also refurbished faded clothing by re-dyeing the cloth with tie-dyed patterns.

In the early decades of the twentieth century, according to Byfield, (2002), a vast trade network for adire spread across West Africa, particularly Ghana, Congo and Senegal.

In the 1930s, two technological innovations to decorate adire were developed that provided an avenue for men to gain entrance into the female-controlled industry. Although the women remain the specialist in the dyeing, tying, hand-painting, and hand-sewing done prior to dyeing, but the men are involved in the aspect of decorating techniques using stitching machine and applying starch through zinc stencils.

However, the 1960s marked a new period of innovation in handcrafted cloth production in Yorubaland. With the growing availability of chemical dyes from Europe, there was a revolution in color and techniques (Keyes-Adenaike, 1993), which attracted the Nigerian fashion designers who adapted the designs to print high-quality cloth using imported color-fast dyes in colors other than indigo.

New multicolored adire utilized a simple technology and became a backyard industry so that the markets filled with the new adire. Hot wax or paraffin was substituted for the indigenous cassava paste as a resist agent, and designs were created by simple techniques including tie-dye, folding, crumpling, and randomly sprinkling or splashing the hot wax onto a cloth prior to dyeing. As demand grew and the new adire makers began to professionalize, a block printing technique to apply the hot wax developed and largely supplanted stenciling (Picton 1995, as cited by the Clothing and Fashion Encyclopedia, 2010). This continuous working on new ideas with new products and production processes has transformed the craft into innovative enterprises, which can be taught in institutions. According to Yuyun (2007) as cited in Saheed and Alofun (2010), the innovative entrepreneurs are referred to as educated entrepreneurs expected to be produced by higher institutions. Such institutions in Nigeria include the Nike Centre for Art & Culture in Osogbo, Lagos and Abuja, where the art of indigo-dyed adire fabrics is taught as a means of inspiring Nigerian women (Okunaye, 2008).

In the twenty-first century, the new colorful adire continues to meet fashion challenges and to be an alternative to machine prints. In continually changing patterns, new adire appeals to the fashion-conscious Yoruba in Nigeria, and international communities.

2.2 The Process of making Adire Textile in Egbaland

The process of making adire textile involves sourcing of the fabric, tying the fabric, dyeing, drying, 'planking' and packing, before they are sewn into the gorgeous designs by the tailors. Each process has a body of skilled artisans committed to delivering the specific tasks.

The first step is getting the piece of cloth which are dyed into the different designs. The design is at the discretion of the owners. A basic sketch is made on the fabric after the design has been decided. In most cases, Guinea brocade is a preferable material for the batik production. The guinea brocade material will be dipped inside cold water to remove the factory's thickness of the cloth.

Wax is then prepared by putting a slate of candle in a large pot and putting on fire to melt (hot wax is flammable, so it is never heated directly over open flame). After melting, a wooden or foam stamp (usually square shape), depending on the design, is then dipped into the melted candle wax and stamped on the guinea in horizontal or vertical form which brings out a desired pattern or design (Tomori, 2011). This is done as quickly as possible, because wax cools and dries rapidly on the applying device. Thereafter, the candle stamped guinea is then left to dry.

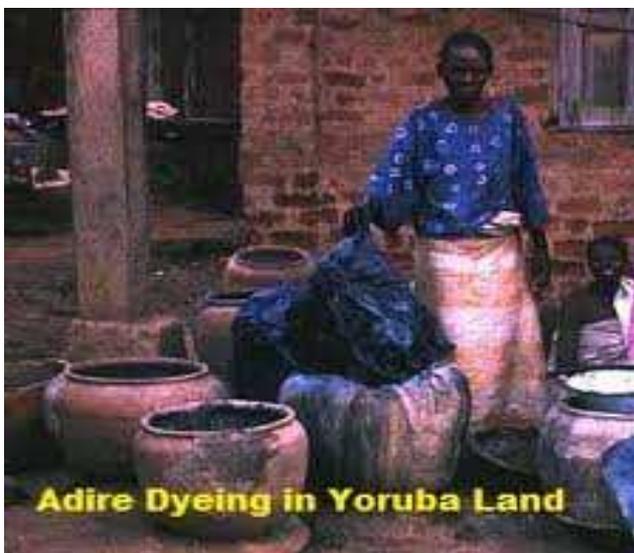


Source: African Textile Gallery

Fig 1: Stamping the adire textile

After drying, the dye is prepared by first pouring hot water into a pot and caustic soda added in the correct proportions. The mixture is stirred until it bubbles, and the dye of choice is added and stirred. The dyes were initially extracted from grasses and leaves which were soaked for a number of days in order to extract the dye from it. However, with new innovation, a hydrosulphide and soda ash are used to make sure the dye is perfectly absorbed in the material.

The waxed cloth is dipped or immersed into the mixture, making sure that all parts of the cloth are dyed. The excess dye is rinsed off and the cloth dried.



Source: African Textile Gallery

The dyed cloth is then soaked for a period of about 30 minutes after which the cloth is taken to the rinsing place. The rinsing method involves putting the batik Kampala into a pot of boiling water to remove the candle wax from the cloth. After which the cloth is dried and starched.

It is thereafter taken to the people referred to as local ironers who fold the batik Kampala with a log of wood over a wooden slab. This next important process after the dyed piece of materials has dried is what is termed 'planking'. Planking is done on a wooden platform by mostly men, who spend hours hitting the adire material with a piece of heavy wood, in a way it would achieve its appearance like a well-ironed fabrics.



Fig. 3 Planking process in adire making

Source: African Textile Gallery

The adire-making process ends in packing, which is the part that has to do with sealing the fabrics in transparent polyethylene coverings for onward dispatch to the shops where customers come to buy them (Emedolibe, 2012).

www.dupsies.com



Fig. 4. Sample of completed adire textile

Sources: Dupsie African Fashion

3.0 Methodology

The research was carried out in Abeokuta (Ogun State), the capital city of adire production in Nigeria. In the context of this study, primary data were sourced through oral interview and structured questionnaire, focusing on the objectives of the study. The questions covers, the mode of entry into the business, the source of finance, size of investment and of course, returns on investment.

The questionnaires were administered to ninety (90) of the adire entrepreneurs, selected through simple random sampling technique, in which every object of research had equal opportunity of being selected. The samples so selected are typically representative to the objective and area of the study.

Eighty (80) completed questionnaires, or 88.9 percent of the total questionnaires administered were returned, and the data collected were analysed and interpreted with the aid of simple statistical averages, like percentage, to make the study more pragmatic and meaningful.

4.0 The Economic Effect of Adire Textile to the People of Egbaland

To understand the effect of the *adire* textile on the economic life of the people of egbaland in Ogun state of Nigeria, the responses of the eighty (80) of the respondents, who answered and returned the questionnaire are analysed below:

4.1 Distribution of Sample according to mode of Entry into Adire Business

| Mode of Entry | Male Frequency | Female Frequency | Total | Percentage |
|-----------------|----------------|------------------|-----------|------------|
| Family Business | 8 | 37 | 45 | 56.25 |
| Learning | 12 | 23 | 35 | 43.75 |
| Total | 20 | 60 | 80 | 100 |

Source: Field Study, 2013

There is a belief that entrepreneur is in born rather than being taught. Table 4.1 above shows the distribution of *adire* textile entrepreneur, based on the mode of entry into the business. The survey result indicates that about 56.25 percent of the respondents actually inherited the business from their parent who also inherited it from their own parent. This actually confirms the in-born nature of entrepreneurship. 82.2 percent of these figures are female while only 17.8 percent are male. 43.75 percent of the respondents, 65.7 percent of which are female and 24.3 percent female, enter into the business through learning, that is, one form of training or the other. This also confirms the fact that apart from inheritance or in-born, entrepreneurship can also be learnt and taught through vocational training or course in schools. The survey result also indicates that 75 percent of the total respondents are female while only 25 percent are male, which show the dominance of female in this business.

4.2 Distribution of Sample According to Size of Investment

| Capital in (N'000) | Frequency Distribution | Percentage Distribution |
|--------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|
| ≤ 100 | 62 | 77.5 |
| 101 – 500 | 9 | 11.25 |
| 501 – 1,000 | 9 | 11.25 |
| Total | 80 | 100 |

Source: Field Study, 2013

According to Jones (2004), investment is the commitment of funds to one or more assets that will be held over some future time period. The amounts of capital committed into a business, especially the initial capital vary from one business to another. Some business requires a large initial capital from a take - off stage to maturity stage, while others require less as a take-off capital. Table 4.2 above shows the distribution of investment size of investment of the *adire* entrepreneurs in Abeokuta, Ogun state, based on the capital involvement. About 77.5 percent of the respondents have less than or N100,000 (USD 625) worth of investment in *adire* textile, about 11.25 percent of the respondents have *adire* textile investment worth between N101,000 – N500,000 (USD 625 -3,125), while about nine of the respondents, which correspond to 11.25 percent of the total respondents have investment worth between N501,000 – N1Million (USD 3,125 – 6,250). The implication of this is that *adire* business does not necessarily require a huge capital for a start. With a reasonable little amount of money, *adire* textile is open new entrants, and with larger amount of capital, it would make it easier for business expansion and give opportunity for new innovation.

4.3 Distribution of Sample According to Sources of Finance

| Source | Frequency Distribution | Percentage Distribution |
|-------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|
| Personal/Family | 51 | 63.75 |
| Microfinance Bank | 24 | 30.0 |
| Commercial Bank | 5 | 6.25 |
| Total | 80 | 100 |

Source: Field Study, 2013

One of the major factors affecting entrepreneurship development in Nigeria is access to capital. Majority of the small scale entrepreneurs lack access to sufficient fund to operate and expand their businesses. Table 4.3 above shows the sources of fund for the *adire* textile entrepreneurs in Abeokuta, Ogun state. Result of survey as

presented in the table indicate that about 63.75 percent of the respondents got their capital through personal savings or from family members, while about 30 percent obtained loans from the microfinance banks. Only about 6.25 percent have access to loan from commercial banks. The implication of this is that the easiest way for people in this sector to source fund for their business activities is through personal savings or family members. Then the microfinance could also be of help as a source of capital, however access to credit facilities from commercial bank seems difficult for the people in this sector because majority of them could not meet the banks requirements, especially in the aspect of collateral.

4.4 Distribution of Sample According to Monthly Income

| Income in (N'000) | Frequency Distribution | Percentage Distribution |
|-------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1 – 50 | 61 | 76.25 |
| 51 – 100 | 7 | 8.75 |
| 101 – 250 | 3 | 3.75 |
| 251 – 500 | 1 | 1.25 |
| 501 – 1,000 | 8 | 10.0 |
| Total | 80 | 100 |

Source: Field Study, 2013

In developing economies, particularly Nigeria, the essence of working or investment in any business is to earn income. Income earning will improve the standard of living of the employees, while earning in form of profit will enable the entrepreneur to expand his business, and it encourage new entrants into the business. Table 4.4 shows the distribution of income of the *adire* textile entrepreneurs in Abeokuta, Ogun state. About 76.25 percent of the respondents earn between N1,000 – N50,000 (USD 6.25 – 312.5) as monthly income, while about 8.75 percent of the respondents earn between N51, 000 – N100,000 (USD 312.51 – 625) per month. About 3.75 percent of the respondent earn between N101,000 – N250,000 (USD 631.25 – 1,562.5), about 1.25 percent earn between N251,000 – N500,000 (USD 1,568.75 - 3,125), and about eight (8) of the respondents which correspond to 10 percent of the total correspondents earn between N501,000 and N1Million (USD 3,125 – 6,250) as monthly income. It can be deduced from the result that the size of investment may not necessarily determine monthly income of the *adire* entrepreneurs. Other factors outside the size of investment, like market share, affect the income earning in the business.

5.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

Adire textile in Nigeria originated from Egbaland as a traditional entrepreneurship, passing from one generation to another. However, innovations have transformed the craft into modern entrepreneurship which knowledge can be acquired through vocational training. Like most of the small scale businesses in developing economies, lack of capital has been a major factor hindering the development of this sector as most of them source for fund through family or personal saving, though microfinance banks to some extent offer credit facilities. Return on investment is not determined by the size of investment, rather by marketing effort. The craft has been a source of employment generation and income to many people including the designers, tailors and other low-skilled labours, and at least provide a source of livelihood to the people of the area.

In order to improve this sector, it is recommended that the government should introduce adire crafts into the academic curriculum to enable interested students acquire the knowledge right from the school. It will enable such students to be self-employed when they eventually graduate.

As a policy, the government, particularly the Ogun state government, should assigned a day in a week, whereby all civil servants and students of state-owned schools wear adire to offices and schools. This will help to improve domestic demand condition which, according to Porter (1990), plays a significant role in upgrading competitive advantage. The characteristics of home demand are particularly important in shaping the attributes of domestically made products and in creating pressures for innovation and quality.

The state government should also establish an adire textile museum where different pattern and adire documentation can be kept for future reference or study of the trends in adire textile development in Nigeria.

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