

## **Consumers' Views and Acceptability of Hand-embroidered Textiles Articles inNsukka Community**

**Iweka, O. A.**

Department of Fine and Applied Arts  
University of Nigeria, Nsukka.

### **Abstract**

This paper investigated on consumers' views and acceptability of hand-embroidered textiles articles in Nsukka community. Specially it determined consumers' perception of hand-embroidered fabric articles; willingness to purchase or acquired hand-embroidered articles and willingness to venture into hand-embroidery business. Descriptive survey research design was adopted. Population was made up of University of Nigeria Nsukka undergraduate students (males and females) who are either consumers or potential consumers of hand-embroidered article. Questionnaire was used for data collection. Data were analysed using frequency and percentage. Findings of the study reveal four areas where the respondents had positive perceptions of hand-embroidery. These include that they like hand-embroidered garment (95%), they know about hand-embroidery (72.5%). Also the respondents indicated "willingness" to purchase hand-embroidered articles in eight ways, including that they do not consider hand-embroidery out dated and should not be explored (92.5%). Other findings are eight ways consumers are willing to venture into hand-embroidery business. These include acquire skills of hand-embroidery (79.37), and that entrepreneurs should organise skill acquisition to train people on hand-embroidery (98.12). Based on the findings five recommendations were made for promoting youth skill acquisition of skills in hand embroidery.

**Keywords:** Hand-embroidery, Textiles, Consumers, Youth, Acceptability, Business.

### **Introduction**

Embroidery is the art of using needle and threads to make decorative stitches on fabrics for various uses such as clothing and furnishings. Stitches are classified into two groups. There are temporary stitches and permanent stitches. The temporary stitches are the basic stitches used to

hold fabrics in place before applying the permanent stitches on the fabrics. Some temporary stitches can also be manipulated to sew fabrics permanently. Temporary stitches include running stitches and tacking. Running stitches can also be manipulated to produce effective embroidery which is permanent. Back

stitch, lock stitch (sewing machine stitch) and all the embroidery stitches are permanent stitches. Some embroidery stitches include chain stitch, satin stitch, leather stitch, cross stitch, ladder stitch and decorative darning. Some of them are demonstrated in the following website [www.thesprucecraft.com](http://www.thesprucecraft.com) and authors and stitchers such as Heathcote (1972), Evans (1987), Woodruffs and Packham (1989), Nicol (1995) and Rousset (2002) have through the years illustrated and elaborated magnanimously on hand embroidery.

Hand-embroidery is an art that Nigerians (especially Nsukka community of southeast of Nigeria) have not explored generously unlike Asians and some other European nations who have immensely explored the art. Their hand embroideries are lavishly displayed in published books, magazines and the internet. This is despite the fact that almost every community in the old Nsukka division engaged in indigenous cloth weaving (Okagu, 2012). This indigenous cloth weaving is however presently a venture that Nsukka community very minimally engage.

Akinwunmi (199) reported that automated embroidery machines came to Nigeria for the first time in the 1950s. Before then, Nigerians engaged confidently in hand-embroideries but very minimally. The minimal practice of hand-embroidery by Nigerians calls for more exposure of the efficacy to the art and skill to Nigerians. As of the 20<sup>th</sup> century some northern Nigerians did engage in hand-embroidery on

cotton fabrics. Hausa people of Nigeria engage in hand-embroidery or stitches utilising mainly the chain stitch. They also engaged the satin stitch and the button-hole stitch. Fulani people of Nigeria hand-embroidered on local and imported cotton. They utilised commercial silk threads and they enjoyed working with bright emerald colour green. They often embroidered with one colour of thread on plain cotton backgrounds (Gostelow, 1978). However, the interview conducted by this research discovered that these people of northern part of Nigeria currently engage the hand embroidery minimally due to the presence of automated embroidery machines that people resort to. The Yorubas in Nigeria are known for their efforts at embroidery. They work or design their indigenous embroidery on their indigenous weave known as *aso-oke*. Embroidery had therefore been practiced in Nigeria by different tribes.

Hand-embroidery need to be encouraged and taught even in schools. It is as effective as machine made embroidery and is less costly to produce. In affirmation, Ossai, (2020) declared that "it is cheaper and easy to sew clothes". All a designer needs in other to engage the hand embroidery is the haberdashery. Whereas in addition to the haberdashery, the designer that works with the embroidery machine has to buy the machine, pay the electric bills incurred by the machine, pay the technician that services and repairs the machine and is rooted in one location as the machine is not conveniently carried about. In

affirmation on costs and management, Diogu et al (2013) discovered that tailoring business “suffer some constraints that slows down the progress of the business. Among these constraints are irregular supply of light, high cost of workshops and poor work environment.” This paper therefore directs people’s attention towards the efficacy of hand embroidery and its economic potential. The stitcher can engage amongst others, different types of thread such as the tailor’s thread, knitting yarn and silk thread. In learning, Ekwealor et al (2020) stated that “it is a process of acculturation through which an individual is helped to attain the development of his/her potentialities and their maximum activation when necessary, according to right reason and to achieve his or her perfect self-fulfilment”.

It is necessary to introduce and expose to people, the art of hand-embroidery which has economic efficacy that is capable of fetching them financial empowerment if they embark on the vocation of artistic hand embroidery. This, Nwigwe and Arua (2019) affirmed and asserted that a person with demonstrable or requisite artistic skills can be self-reliant. Ikenegbu et al (2021) observed that in Nigeria, a significant population of youths has taken to fraudulent activities to earn their living. This paper aims at helping people become properly and gainfully employed. In the long run, school leavers and university graduates can thus become

properly engaged and employed instead of resorting to fraudulence.

Sowemimo et al (2019) detected the current poor patronage of *adire* fabrics by Nigerians which is great financial loss in business for *adire* manufacturers in this era of financial impoverishment. This issue needs to be addressed, hence this study. Sani (2021) and Ozor et al (2019) observed that some of the reasons for clothing include enhancement of appearance and traditional identity which are also some contributions of hand-embroidered clothes. Hand-embroidery avails the designer the convenience of designing exactly the traditional theme he or she has in mind to design especially for Nigerians who appreciate dressing in clothing with indigenous Nigerian themes expressed on the cloth. Engaging in hand-embroidery will avail the stitcher (as a designer) the opportunity of developing and displaying his or her skills which will aid birthing out his or her personal ideas and the ideas of his or her clients visually on fabrics just as Tregenza (2021).

Hand-embroidery as a possible income generating opportunity for individuals needs to be popularized in Nigeria. One of the ways of doing this is to evolve ways of enhancing acceptance of hand-embroidered articles by consumers, and creating awareness of the potentials of the handi-craft as an income generating opportunity for individuals.

### **Purpose of Study**

The major purpose of the study was to investigate consumers' views and acceptability of hand embroidered textiles articles in Nsukka community. Specifically the study determined consumers'

1. perceptions of hand embroidered fabric articles.
2. willingness to purchase or acquire hand-embroidered articles.
3. willingness to venture into hand embroidery business.

### **Methodology**

*Design of the Study:* Descriptive survey research design was adopted for the research.

*Area of the Study:* The area of the study was Nsukka town of Enugu State. It is of the Igbo ethnicity although people from other ethnicities and nationalities are also resident in Nsukka because it is a University town.

*Population of the Study:* The population was made up of University of Nigeria Nsukka undergraduate students (males and females) who are either consumers or potential consumers of hand-embroidered articles. These youths are often conscious and mindful of their clothing. The size of the population could not be established at the time of the study.

*Sample for the Study:* The sample was made up of total 160 undergraduate students (youths). In order to obtain this sample, four Faculties were purposively selected and two Departments were randomly selected from each faculty. Twenty students

were (10 males and 10 females) were randomly selected from each of the eight Departments to give a total of 160 undergraduates.

*Instrument for Data Collection:* Questionnaire was used for data collection. The questionnaire was developed based on the specific purposes of the study and literature review. The instrument was validated by three University lecturers of Clothing and Textiles who also teach Embroidery. Respondents were expected to respond to "Yes" or "No" options for items in the questionnaire.

*Data Collection Method:* One hundred and sixty (160) copies of questionnaire were distributed to respondents by hand. The entire 160 copies of the questionnaires duly responded to and returned. The return rate was 100 percent.

*Data Analysis Techniques:* Data were analyzed using frequencies and percentages. Responses are presented in Tables 1, 2 and 3. For Table 1 which focuses on specific purpose No1, any item with a percentage responses of >50 percent is regarded as a "Positive Perception" (PP), while any with a percentage response of less than 50 percent (<50%) is regarded as a "Negative Perception" (NP). For Tables 2 and 3, responses of 50 percent and above (> 50%) are regarded as "Willingness" (W), while those of less than 50 percent were regarded as "Not Willing" (NW).

### **Findings of the Study**

**Table 1: Percentage Responses on Consumers Perception of Hand Embroidery**

S/N	Consumers' Perception	Yes (F %)	Remarks
1.	Do you like embroidered garments?	152(95)	PP
2.	Do you know about hand-embroidery?	116(72.5)	PP
3.	Do you engage in hand-embroidery?	19(11.87)	NP
4.	Do you have a personal embroidery machine?	4(2.5)	NP
5.	Do you have hand-embroidery hoop or frame?	8(5)	NP
6.	Do you know of any club where hand-embroidery is taught?	22(13.7)	NP
7.	Do members of your family engage in hand embroidery?	10(6.2)	NP
8.	Do your friends engage in hand-embroidery?	24(15)	NP
9.	Was hand-embroidery taught in the school you attended?	29(18.1)	NP
10.	Do you have embroidered cloth?	123(76.8)	PP
11.	Do you engage in any hand clothing work?	135(84.3)	PP

*PP = Positive Perception; NP = Negative Perception*

Table1 shows that four out of the 11 perception indicators have percentage responses of more than 50 percent (>50%) (95%, 72.5%, 76.8% and 84.3%). Each of the other seven indicators has percentage responses of less than 50 percent (<50%). The highest percentage of them (95%) is they, "like embroidered garments", while 72.5 percent "know about hand-embroidery". There are thus four items with "positive perception" scores of >50 percent.

**Table 2: Percentage Responses on Consumers Willingness to Purchase or Acquire Hand-embroidered Articles**

S/N	Consumers' Willingness to Purchase	F(%)	Remarks
1.	Do you consider hand-embroidery out dated and should not be explored?	148(92.5)	W
2.	Will you prefer the patronage of hand embroidery to machine made ones?	121(75.62)	W
3.	Will you prefer to purchase dresses with hand-embroidery to none embroidered ones?	134(83.75)	W
4.	Is your choice of hand-embroidered informed by the beauty?	152(95)	W
5.	Is your preference of hand-embroidered informed by the cost?	(48.75)	N W
6.	Do people like your hand works?	128(80)	W
7.	Do you consider the quality of hand-embroidered cloth good enough and acceptable?	146(91.25)	W
8.	Do you consider hand-embroidery time wasting?	41(25.62)	N W
9.	Will you encourage others to embark on hand-embroidery?	41(88.12)	W
10.	Have you ever seen anyone dressed in hand-embroidered garment?	150(93.75)	W

*W = Willingness to Purchase; NW = Not Willing to Purchase*

Table 2 shows that eight out of the 10 “willingness” indicators obtained percentage responses of more than 50 percent (>50%) (92.5%, 75.62%, 83.75%, 95%, 80%, 91.25%, 88.12% and 93.75%). Only two “willingness” indicators scored below 50 percent (<50%) (48.75% and 25.62%). It could be said that there high willingness to acquire embroidered articles among the consumers.

**Table 3: Percentage Responses on Consumers Willingness to Venture into Hand-embroidery Business.**

S/N	Consumers’ Willingness to Venture	F(%)	Remarks
1.	Are you presently employed?	33(20.62)	N W
2.	Will you like to acquire skills of hand embroidery?	129(79.37)	W
3.	Do you like my samples of hand- embroidered?	146(91.25)	W
4.	Do you prefer machine made embroidery to hand- embroidery?	75(46.87)	N W
5.	Do you think that business of hand- embroidery can help people survive socio-economic challenges?	147(91.87)	W
6.	Should unemployed graduates be encouraged to venture into hand-embroidery?	148(92.5)	N W
7.	Are you less busy for hand-embroidery skill acquisition?	68(42.5)	N W
8.	Do you foresee chances of you making money with the hand-embroidery?	93(58.12)	W
9.	Do you have flair for hand works?	137(85.62)	W
10.	Do you consider that engaging in hand-embroidery works would give you joy?	160(100)	W
11.	Should hand-embroidery be given enough practical application in the classes in schools?	153(95.62)	W
12.	Do you think entrepreneurs should organise skill acquisition to train people on hand- embroidery?	157(98.12)	W
13.	Do you personally know of anybody that engages in hand-embroidery in Nsukka, write his or her name?	5(3.12)	N W

*W = Willingness to Venture; NW; Not Willing to Venture.*

Table 3 shows that nine out of the 13 indicators of “willingness to venture” into hand-embroidery business, obtained percentage scores of 50 percent and above (>50%). Only four “willingness indicators” have scores less than 50 percent. Infact, item No 10 has a score of 100 percent, showing that all the respondents (consumers), “do consider that engaging in hand-embroidery work would give you (them) joy”

### Discussion of Findings

The finding in Table 1 shows that most of the respondents are aware of the hand embroidery but generally do not engage in the hand embroidery which is a result of lack of inspiration, motivation and avenues of learning hand embroidery. Wonah and Sonye(2020) agreed and stated that there is “the need for more practical teaching in clothing and textile related

business ventures for self-reliance". Similarly, Kumudha and Rizwana (2013) who attempted to understand the customer awareness about handloom products with special reference to Erode district in India, discovered that consumers are not very much aware of handloom products and thus suggested that sufficient efforts should be made in order to increase the awareness of handloom products. Their suggestions included "more promotions like special offers, rebates, free gifts..." This study proposes that such promotional strategies should also be adopted by motivators in order to elevate the engagement of hand embroidery.

The findings on the willingness of consumers to purchase or acquire hand embroidered articles are derived from Table 2. Hand embroidery has the efficacy of aiding expressions of traditional ideas and symbols on fabrics. Adiji (2018) disclosed that Hausa traditional embroidery designs on caps are particularly appreciated and valued for their symbolism which expresses Hausa cultures. The Hausas have for decades best expressed these symbolisms by hand embroidery.

Although the American Marketing Association (AMA) (2015) inferred that products of machine-make are generally of very high quality, and mostly cheaper than handmade items, some consumers view the handmade products themselves to be imbued with affection. Thus, while explaining what love has to do with handmade products, Fuchs et al. (2014) affirmed

that consumers distinctly preferred handmade products when they purchased items for loved ones, and many people were willing to pay as much as 17% above the actual price for items that were handmade. Consumers appeared to accept that the handmade products demonstrate love attached to them especially when they come as a gift from an associate.

In the light of the present research, it is logical to assume that emphasizing the handmade aspect of a product can make it significantly more attractive, especially when consumers want to express affection to someone. Thus, artistic hand embroidery possesses the additive potential of attracting purchasing power if there is quality assurance that makes them acceptable to consumers. Adiji et al (2016) mentioned "that quality remained the motivation for the consumers of hand embroidery".

The findings on the willingness of consumers to venture into the business of hand embroidery as demonstrated in Table 3 reveals that a significant number of consumers are willing to consider this vocation as means of livelihood. Although hand embroidery is not a common business in Nsukka, it is an ever growing practice with a worldwide popularity. Western authors including Rousset (2002) have extensively exposed the world popularity of hand embroidery. Onorhiere and Bamson (2020) identified "lack of entrepreneurial development center" as a factor that constrains skill acquisition in Delta State of Nigeria.

This research discovered that consumers (respondents) have neither shown much interest in acquiring the skill/art of hand embroidery nor embarking on it as money making venture because of the presence of automated machines that engages the designs. However, the interview by this research discovered resident in Nsukka a man from Agatu ethnic group of Benue State of Nigeria who engages in hand embroidery on clothes as a profession. Mr Mukaila Adamu came to reside in Nsukka in 2004 and on learning the hand embroidery from his brother Yusuf Adamu, he took up the hand embroidery as a profession in 2007. He designs with the cross-stitches, blanket stitches, running stitches and star stitches. Mr Mukaila Adamu disclosed that ever since his stay in Nsukka, which is 17 years today, people have not shown much interest in acquiring the skill/art and embarking on it. He revealed that before he came to Nsukka, his parents had lived in Nsukka for as long as 15 years and never witnessed anybody engage the hand embroidery. Adamu disclosed that patronage of the handmade embroidery is minimal because of the presence of automated machines that engages the designs. His brother Yusuf Adamu who learnt the hand embroidery from Oturukpo town in Idoma ethnic group of Benue State has switched or changed business because the hand embroidery was not fetching him enough money.

Mr Mukaila Adamu who has a secondary school certificate and

currently engages in the hand-embroidery, supplements his meager earning from the handmade embroidery with the proceeds of the security work he also engages in. Out of the 160 people interviewed, only Mukaila Adamu engages in the hand embroidery as money making venture.

It is worthwhile to support and promote the business of hand embroidery as a means of alleviating Nigeria from the poverty rate in the nation. According to Oparah et al (2018), more than 70 percent of Nigerians are poverty stricken. In the words of Oparah et al (2018), "successful small businesses are critical to maintaining a robust and virile economy. They broaden the base of participation in the society, create jobs, decentralize economic power and give the citizens a stake in the future".

This research also discovered amongst the university undergraduate students interviewed that there are some students (especially of Home Economics studies) who are knowledgeable of some types of stitches that exists but do not however, engage in the hand embroidery. However, the research encountered one student of home economics education who showed the researcher some of her hand embroideries on her personal dresses. The student's name is Esther Nnadi.

### **Conclusion**

This study has shown that high percentage of the consumers (youth) are willing to purchase or acquire hand-embroidered articles even



though many might not have the right or positive perceptions of the art work that goes into the craft. They might not even appreciate that the skills involved could be learned. Also it is interesting to note that many of them see hand-embroidery as a worthwhile entrepreneurial venture. This means that acquisition of hand-embroidery skills could help youths engage in income generating activities and avert unemployment and related challenges.

### Recommendations

Based on the findings of the research, it was recommended that:

1. Schools should give opportunities to learners for more practical teaching on hand-embroidery in fashion designing, clothing and textile subjects and courses in order to make them familiar with hand embroidery and be prepared for the business venture and self-reliance.
2. The government should provide the necessary hand-embroidery facilities and train teachers to motivate students to be willing to venture into the business of hand-embroidery after school.
3. The government and Non-Governmental-Organisations (NGO) should also build tutorial and skill acquisition centres where the stitches can be taught in collaboration with entrepreneurs and skilled artists.
4. People explore the hand-embroidery as a means of economic empowerment. School leavers and unemployed graduates who do not have the capital to purchase embroidery machines with which to

engage the embroidery can most easily and conveniently engage the hand embroidery and produce equally effective and even better embroidery.

5. Fashion designers who are in the business of hand embroidery should be more creative and innovative so as to improve on consumers' organoleptic perception and appreciation of the handmade embroidered products.

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