FACTORS INFLUENCING THE SELECTION AND ACQUISITION OF CLOTHING ITEMS AMONG UNDEGRADUATES IN FEDERAL POLYTECHNIC ADO-EKITI

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Abstract

This study examined the factors influencing the selection and acquisition of clothing items among undergraduates in Federal Polytechnic Ado-Ekiti, Ekiti State. Many undergraduates often find themselves in situations where they borrow clothes for social events like parties, buy clothes on credit, or allocate a significant portion of their pocket money to clothing purchases. These behaviors stem from a desire to maintain a certain social image, adhere to fashion trends, or fit in with peers, often leading to financial strain and dependence on borrowing. Three research questions and one hypothesis guided the study. The study examined the physical features of the clothing, psychological and socio-economic factors that influenced the selection and acquisition of clothing items among these undergraduates. A descriptive survey research approach was adopted for this study. Simple random sampling techniques were used to select Two Hundred and Five (205) respondents. The questionnaire used for data collection was designed and titled "Factors Influencing the Selection and Acquisition of Clothing Items (FISACI)". Findings from the respondents showed that, Physical features like style, quality of material, and fit ($\bar{x}$=3.24), significantly influence undergraduates' clothing choices, psychological factors, including the desire to express personal identity and peer pressure ($\bar{x}$=3.29), drive many clothing purchases among undergraduates, Socioeconomic factors, such as income level and financial literacy ($\bar{x}$=3.11), strongly impact students' ability to make informed clothing purchases. Data were analyzed using mean, standard deviation and t-test. Based on the findings, undergraduates should learn to live within their means by budgeting for all clothing expenses before buying. Also, undergraduates desired of good taste in clothing selection can make up for the extra expenses by engaging in part time jobs; among other recommendations were made.

Keyword: Clothing selection, Acquisition, Undergraduates

Introduction

Clothing refers to any item worn on human body. It is any bodily adornment or appearance modification made of the human form, this includes the use of clothes, and tattoo, make-up, and hair do (Horn, 2019). Clothing can also be referred to as a piece of fiber of different materials and styles that people wear to cover their bodies as a basic need. Fiber is the basic unit from which fabric used for clothing construction is made. Each fiber has its independent characteristics that contribute to the performance quality of the final fabric or clothing item. Fibers are classified as natural and man-made fibers. Cotton, silk, linen and wool is natural fibers, while nylon, acrylic, rayon, viscose, polyester are man-made fibers (Gitobu, 2019). Fabric finishes as the general term for multitude of processes and treatments, which fabrics may undergo after they have been made. These includes calendaring, mercerization, mothproof, flame resistance, shrink resistance, crease resistance, among others. For example, crease resistance finish is used on cotton, rayon and linen fabrics because they crease easily (Thurow, 2017). Clothing protects the vulnerable nude human body from the extremes of weather, other features of the environment and for safety reasons. People also decorate their bodies with make up or cosmetics, perfume and other ornamentations; they also cut, dye and arrange their hair of their heads, faces and bodies. They also mark their skin (by tattoos, scarification and piercing (Kaiser, 2020). Typically, clothing is made of fabrics or textiles, but over time it has included garments made from animal skin and other thin sheets from materials and natural products found in the environment put together (Anyakoha, 2018).

Clothing selection and acquisition is a product of social construction that defines what people choose to wear. The choice if what, how and when to select what individuals, wears is based on the perception that surrounds their reality. It could also be referred to as how to purchase or obtain what to wear including methods of sewing garments or making and when to wear clothes for various occasions (Anyakoha, 2018). Clothing selection and acquisition can be a pleasurable and relaxed process or a stressful one. It all boils down to how one thinks and handles the situation whether in selecting clothes in person or online (Anyakoha, 2018). What people wear often depicts the social life of the people across the world. The quest to cover the nakedness of mankind plays a significant role in defining the original purpose and intent of dressing. Thus, dressing is not just for clothing purposes but for adornments (Schall & Appiah, 2018). Clothing can be described as something worn on the body and this includes materials

such as garments, shoes, jewellery, cosmetics, and others. It is also a form of cultural expression that depicts every aspect of human life (Kiran, Malik, Riaz, 2002). The human dress is a kind of symbolic way of communication and is usually the basis on which immediate impressions are formed (Uwakwe, 2020). The style of clothing that people wear, the fabrics, designs and colours can speak largely, the way an individual thinks and lives (Uwakwe, 2020). Ibrahim, (2018) opined that the display of fashion designer's products via social media platforms often inspire and influence changes in the clothing of the people.

Similarly, clothing choice and acquisition are an important human activity that constitutes the selection, acquisition and utilization of clothes. These activities are affected by social reasons, values, goals and self-concept (Wole, Ibrahim, Shehu & John, 2021). The way we dress is a significant way of revealing our culture and its differences in other societies. Unfortunately, the value of dressing and its purposes have been defeated by the current generation of youths in Nigeria (Omede, 2011). Over the years, there have been trends at which fashion and dressing have changed and evolved so to say.

Clothing and personal appearance are visible components we use to differentiate and identify others and ourselves. Often, buying behaviour is determined by pragmatic criteria and situations. Choosing the appropriate clothes for going to college, for studying, or for doing housework, gardening or yard work, going grocery shopping, or going to the beach do not require much more than criteria of comfort. On the other hand, dressing for a job interview, a dinner party, for a wedding, or as a law enforcement officer, entail specific calculations about clothing behaviour and milieu.

In the selection of clothing, two main factors, namely, social and psychological factors have been found to influence most consumers (Meyer & Anderson, 2020). Psychological factors of clothing provide one of the visual and easily manipulated means of presentation of an individual personality or self-concept as asserted by Kaizer, (2020). There are many psychological theories used by researchers in an attempt to explain clothing behaviour of adults. One of them is self-concept. Self-concept is the individual's mental system of organizing his or her perception and concept about self (Storm, 2017). Apart from social and psychological factors, other factors that have been found to have strong influence in selection of clothing are cultural and environmental factors. (Kiran, Riaz & Malik, 2002) was of the view that clothing styles associated with either sex evolved out of customs, traditions, religion, work and leisure

activities. Apart from the practical function of putting on a piece of garment above the skin, wearing clothes also carries specific cultural and social meanings. In the past, the manner of clothing has been used to differentiate between the elites and non-elites, males and females. However, to day clothing may be used to distinguish between those of low socio-economic status and those of high socio-economic status.

Fashion is a dynamic collective process yet it influences individuals 'lives in a distinctively personal way (Sproles, 2019). It is through the process of fashion that new styles are created, introduced to a consuming public and popularly accepted by that public (Kaiser, 2020). A society 's economic structure and its culture, or traditions and way of life, also influence the clothing that its people wear.   In many societies, religious laws regulated personal behaviour and permitted only members of an elite class to wear certain prestigious items of clothing assert Roach-Higgins, (2022). All these issues necessitated the study on factors influencing clothing selection and acquisition among undergraduates in Federal Polytechnic Ado Ekiti.

Statement of the Problem

It was observed by the researchers that, many undergraduates often find themselves in situations where they borrow clothes for social events like parties, buy clothes on credit, or allocate a significant portion of their pocket money to clothing purchases. These behaviours stem from a desire to maintain a certain social image, adhere to fashion trends, or fit in with peers, often leading to financial strain and dependence on borrowing. This research aims to explore the underlying factors that drive these behaviours, including the influence of physical features of clothing, psychological pressures, and socioeconomic challenges. Understanding these factors can help in developing strategies to support undergraduates in making more sustainable and financially responsible clothing choices.

Research Questions

This study provided answers to the following research questions:

i.   What are the physical features of clothing influencing its selection and acquisition among undergraduates in Federal Polytechnic Ado Ekiti?

ii.   What are the psychological factors influencing clothing selection and acquisition among undergraduates in Federal Polytechnic Ado Ekiti?

iii.   What are the socio-economic factors influencing clothing selection and acquisition among undergraduates in Federal Polytechnic Ado Ekiti?

Research Hypothesis

One null hypothesis was formulated and tested at 0.05 significance

H_{01}:   There is no significant difference in the mean rating of male and female respondents on the physical features of clothing influencing its selection and acquisition among undergraduates in Federal Polytechnic Ado Ekiti.

Methodology

The study adopted descriptive research design. This was considered appropriate for the study because the subjects were reached in their natural environment (Horn, 2019). As a survey, it seeks the factors influencing the selection and acquisition of clothing items among undergraduates in Federal Polytechnic, Ado Ekiti. The study was carried out among undergraduates of Federal Polytechnic Ado-Ekiti. The school is one of the tertiary institutions in South West, Nigeria with a total population of over Ten thousand students. The Federal Polytechnic, Ado-Ekiti, established in 1977, initially began as a College of Technology in Jos, Plateau State. It was subsequently moved to Akure, Ondo State, and finally to its current location in Ado-Ekiti, Ekiti State, in 1982. (https://fedpolyado.edu.ng).

The population of the study consisted of undergraduates in Federal Polytechnic Ado-Ekiti, Ekiti State. The population was 10,216 (*Source:* (https://fedpolyado.edu.ng, *2024*). Random sampling technique and balloting were used to select the samples. Five (5) Departments were selected using balloting. Forty-four (44) respondents were equally selected from each Department; making a total of Two Hundred and Five (205) respondents the study. This represents about 2% of the total population. The study adopted a 4-Likert Scale options denoting Strongly Agreed (SA)= 4, Agreed (A) = 3 Disagreed (D) = 2, Strongly Disagreed (SD) = 1. The questionnaire was titled "Factors Influencing the Selection and Acquisition of Clothing Items among Undergraduates Questionnaire [FISACIQ]".

The research instrument was subjected to validated by two research experts in the Department of Home Economics for assessment and necessary corrections to ensure that the instrument measures what it is expected to measure. Two Hundred and Five (205) validated questionnaire

copies were administered to the respondents with the help a research assistant and the completed questionnaire copies were collected immediately to avoid loss. The data collected were analysed using mean and standard deviation. T-test was used to analyse the hypothesis.

Results and Discussion

Table 1: Demographic Data of Respondents

S/N	ITEMS	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Gender	Male	83	40.49
	Female	122	59.51
	Total	**205**	**100%**
Level	First Year	37	18.05
	Final Year	75	36.58
	Others	93	45.37
	Total	**205**	**100%**
Age	18-22	76	37.07
	23-27	107	52.20
	28 and above	22	10.73
	Total	**205**	**100%**
Marital Status	Single	181	88.29
	Married	24	11.71
	Total	**205**	**100%**

Source: Field Survey, 2024

The data presented in Table 1 above showed that, 83 (40.49%) of the respondents were male while 122 (59.51%) were female. However, 37 (18.05%) were in First year, 75 (36.58%) were in Final year, while 93 (45.37%) were in other levels. The age distribution of respondents showed that, 76 (37.07%) were aged between 18-22years, 107 (52.20%) were aged between 23-27years and just 22 (10.73%) were 28 years and above aged. This indicated that the majority of the respondents were between 23-27years of age. According to marital status, 181 (88.29%) were single, while just 24 (11.71%) were married. This indicated that, majority of the respondents were single.

Research Question One: What are the physical features of clothing influencing its selection and acquisition among undergraduates in Federal Polytechnic Ado Ekiti?

Table 2: Responses of respondents on the physical features of clothing influencing its selection and acquisition among undergraduates in Federal Polytechnic Ado Ekiti.

N= 205, C= 2.50

S/N	ITEMS	$\bar{x}$	SD	DECISION
1.	Soft, breathable and non-restrictive fabrics that ensure	3.29	0.15	Agreed
2.	Proper fitting clothing that is neither too loose	3.67	0.24	Agreed
3.	Colours can influence mood and perception	3.55	0.13	Agreed
4.	Clothing made with quality materials that can withstand frequent washing	3.14	0.16	Agreed

Key: X= Mean, N= Number of respondents, C= Cut-off point, SD= Standard Deviation

Source: Field Survey (2024)

The data presented in table 2 above revealed the physical features of clothing influencing its selection and acquisition among undergraduates in Federal Polytechnic Ado Ekiti and all the questionnaire items raised have the mean above 2.5. This showed that respondents agreed with all the items 1,2,3 and 4 with mean values of 3.29, 3.67, 3.55 and 3.14 respectively which are all above the cut-off point and mean value of 2.50 as the decision point. However, the Standard

Deviations ranged between 0.13-0.24 and are low. This implies that the values are clustered around the mean.

Research Question Two: What are the psychological factors influencing clothing selection and acquisition among undergraduates in Federal Polytechnic Ado Ekiti?

Table 3: Responses of respondents on the psychological factors influencing clothing selection and acquisition among undergraduates in Federal Polytechnic Ado Ekiti.

N= 205, C= 2.50

S/N	ITEMS	$\bar{x}$	SD	DECISION
5.	Clothing that reflects personal identity and how to be perceived by peers	3.34	0.31	Agreed
6.	Pressure to conform to the dress expectation of peers and the school administration	3.68	0.69	Agreed
7.	Personal cultural backgrounds and beliefs can shape clothing preferences	3.27	0.82	Agreed
8.	Self-concept and perception about clothing.	3.42	0.84	Agreed

Key: X= Mean, N= Number of respondents, C= Cut-off point, SD= Standard Deviation

Source: Field Survey (2024)

The data presented in table 3 above showed the psychological factors influencing clothing selection and acquisition among undergraduates in Federal Polytechnic Ado Ekiti. Respondents agreed with all the items 5,6,7 and 8, with mean values of 3.34, 3.68, 3.27 and 3.42, which are all above the cut-off point and mean value of 2.50 as the decision point. However, the Standard Deviations ranged between 0.31-0.84 and are low. This implies that the values are clustered around the mean.

Research Question Three: What are the socio-economic factors influencing clothing selection and acquisition among undergraduates in Federal Polytechnic Ado Ekiti?

Table 4: Responses of respondents on the socio-economic factors influencing clothing selection and acquisition among undergraduates in Federal Polytechnic Ado Ekiti.

N= 205, C= 2.50

S/N	ITEMS	$\bar{x}$	SD	DECISION
9.	Social class	3.22	0.14	Agreed
10.	Age	2.78	0.66	Agreed
11.	Income	3.48	0.30	Agreed
12.	Religion	2.82	0.53	Agreed
13.	Price or Cost	3.31	0.22	Agreed

Key: X= Mean, N= Number of respondents, C= Cut-off point, SD= Standard Deviation

Source: Field Survey (2024)

The data presented in table 4 above showed the socio-economic factors influencing clothing selection and acquisition among undergraduates in Federal Polytechnic Ado Ekiti. This showed that respondents agreed with all the items 9,10,11,12 and 13, with mean values of 3.22, 2.78, 3.48, 2.82, 3.31, 2.57 and 3.40 respectively which are all above the cut-off point and mean value of 2.50 as the decision point. However, the Standard Deviations ranged between 0.14-0.66 and are low. This implies that the values are clustered around the mean.

Hypothesis Testing

Table 5: t-test Comparison between Male and Female Undergraduates' opinion on the physical features of clothing influencing its selection and acquisition among undergraduates in Federal Polytechnic Ado Ekiti.

Gender	N	X	SD	df	t-cal	t-crit	Decision
Male	83	3.52	0.52				
				203	3.31*	1.96	Significant

Female	122	3.62	0.55

Key: N= number of respondents, x = mean, SD=standard deviation, df = degree of freedom, t-cal = t-test calculated value, *Significant at .05

Results in Table 6 showed that male respondents (83 in number) had a mean rating of 3.52 and standard deviation of 0.52, while the female respondents (122 in number) had a mean rating of 3.62 and standard deviation of 0.55. These yielded a calculated t-value of 3.319, which is more than the critical t-value of 1.96 at 203 degrees of freedom and was considered to be significant. Hence, the null hypothesis of no significant difference between Male and Female Undergraduates' opinion on the physical features of clothing influencing its selection and acquisition among undergraduates in Federal Polytechnic Ado Ekiti was rejected.

Discussion of Findings

The findings from research question one revealed that soft, breathable, and non-restrictive fabrics that ensure ease of movement and all-day comfort are highly preferred, proper fitting clothing that is neither too loose can significantly impact comfort and appearance, influencing its selection, colours can influence mood and perception, bright colours might be chosen to appear more approachable, while neutral colours can be perceived as more professional, durability materials that withstand frequent washing and wear, ensuring the clothing lasts longer are crucial in clothing selection and acquisition. This is in line with the finding of (Gitobu, 2019) that, fiber is the basic unit from which fabric used for clothing construction is made. Each fiber has its independent characteristics that contribute to the performance quality of the fabric or clothing item. Fibers are classified as natural and man-made fibers. Cotton, silk, linen and wool is natural fibers, while nylon, acrylic, rayon, viscose, polyester are man-made fibers. Thurow, (2017) describes fabric finishes as the general term for multitude of processes and treatments which fabrics may undergo after they have been made. These includes calendaring, mercerization, mothproof, flame resistance, shrink resistance, crease resistance, among others. For example, crease resistance finish is used on cotton, rayon and linen fabrics because they crease easily. Clothing protects the vulnerable nude human body from the extremes of weather, other features of the environment and for safety reasons. People also decorate their bodies with make up or cosmetics, perfume and other ornamentations; they also cut, dye and arrange their hair of their heads, faces and bodies. They also mark their skin (by tattoos, scarification and

piercing). All these decorations contribute to the overall effect and message of clothing (Kaiser, (2020).

In research question two, it indicated that undergraduates often choose clothing that reflects their personal identity and how they wish to be perceived by peers, undergraduates may feel pressured to conform to the dress expectation of their peers and the school administration, personal cultural backgrounds and beliefs can shape student's clothing preferences. This is in line with the finding of Kaizer, (2020) which states that psychological factors of clothing provide one of the visual and easily manipulated means of presentation of an individual personality or self-concept as asserted by Kaizer, (2020). There are many psychological theories used by researchers in an attempt to explain clothing behaviour of adults. One of them is self-concept. Storm, (2017) suggests that self-concept is the individual's mental system of organizing his or her perception and concept about self. Dressing contributes to express individuality as well as the need to conform to others. Undergraduates may select clothing that may be suitable in working situation or in school and at the same time conform to society's values.

According to the findings from research question three, it was revealed that income and religion greatly influence the selection and acquisition of clothing items among undergraduates in Federal Polytechnic Ado-Ekiti. This is in line with the finding of Sproles, (2019) which says that socio-economic factors that influence students' clothing selection include fashion, social class, age, income, religion, educational level and price. According to Sproles, (2019), fashion is a dynamic collective process yet it influences individuals 'lives in a distinctively personal way. It is through the process of fashion that new styles are created, introduced to a consuming public and popularly accepted by that public (Kaiser, 2020). A society 's economic structure and its culture, or traditions and way of life, also influence the clothing that its people wear. In many societies, religious laws regulated personal behaviour and permitted only members of an elite class to wear certain prestigious items of clothing assert Roach-Higgins, (2022).

Test of the null hypothesis indicates that there is a negative, low and significant relationship between the mean responses of male and female respondents on socio-economic factors influencing clothing selection and acquisition among undergraduates in Federal Polytechnic Ado-Ekiti. Hence, it was rejected.

Conclusion

The focus of this paper was on the factors influencing clothing selection and acquisition among the undergraduates in Federal Polytechnic Ado-Ekiti; the study identified the physical characteristics of the clothing that influenced undergraduates' clothing selection and acquisition, the psychological factors and the socio-economic factors that influenced their clothing selection and acquisition. Based on the findings of the study, it can be concluded that, clothing selection and acquisition can be a pleasurable or stressful one because of some identified factors. Fabric quality, income level and financial literacy were major factors that significantly influence undergraduates' clothing choices.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Undergraduates should learn to live within their means by budgeting for all clothing expenses before buying.

2. Educational institutions can implement financial literacy programs that teach undergraduates in finances management.

3. Undergraduates desired of good taste in clothing selection can make up for the extra expenses by engaging in part time jobs.

4. Further research can be carried out on this topic using larger samples.

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