

Consumer Preferences for African Prints

across Age Groups in Southwest Nigeria

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Abstract

This study examined the perceptions and preferences of African print consumers across different age groups in Southwest Nigeria. The study examined the relationship between cultural, social, and economic factors shaping consumer choices of African print fabric usage. A mixed-methods research design was employed, integrating a quantitative online survey with qualitative focus group discussion. The research instruments were validated through expert review, pilot testing, and reliability analysis, yielding a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.86, which confirmed strong internal consistency. A sample size of 384 was determined using an online sample size calculator. The online questionnaire was distributed across the six states of the region which yielded responses from 384 consumers. Participants from all age groups and states were represented but younger and more digitally active respondents were more represented due to the mode of data collection. Descriptive statistics, including frequency distributions, percentages, and mean scores, were used to summarise socio-demographic patterns and address the objectives while the Kruskal–Wallis H test was used for the inferential statistics to test the hypotheses. The qualitative data gathered during the focus groups discussion provided deeper context to the statistical findings. The study revealed that African prints have positive perception across all age groups in Nigeria. It was also discovered that although African prints are perceived as suitable for all age groups, preferences for design features vary by age. The study revealed among others, that the younger generation prefer to use African prints for hybrid fashion, that is, combining it with other modern fabrics while the older generation prefer the primitive method of styling the fabric. The study recommends that African print designers adopt a user-centred design approach, tailoring styles to age-specific preferences while promoting the cross-generational appeal of African prints.

Keywords: African Print, Perception, Preference, Age groups, Southwest, Nigeria

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Introduction

In the global fashion industry, textiles are not mere articles of clothing, they are cultural items and symbols of identity with a potentials for economic drive. Among these, wax-resist dyed textiles, produced mechanically, popularly known as African prints, have gained significant international recognition (Kalilu and Adeoti, 2023:241). These fabrics originated from Indonesian batik and were introduced to West Africa through colonial trade networks. Over time, they have been adopted, indigenized, and transformed into vibrant expressions of African creativity and cultural pride. African prints, a term used to describe vibrant-coloured textiles, produced mechanically using the wax-resist dyeing method, is a major component of African fashion. It reflects the rich cultural heritage of the Africa and also the dynamic evolution of global fashion trends. African prints stand out as a powerful expression of cultural identity and creativity (Adeoti, 2023:130).

In Africa, these prints hold a complex duality. Although they are symbols of African identity, they are also commercially produced outside the continent, particularly in Europe and Asia (Adepeko, Oyinloye, Adepeko and Adeloye, 2023:80). African prints have therefore sparked scholarly debate around authenticity, ownership, and postcolonial identity. Several studies have examined how these textiles contribute to national and regional identities across Africa, with particular attention to their role in social rituals, political statements, and everyday fashion. Kalilu and Adeoti (2023:243) noted that despite the complex duality of African prints, they are essential articles of clothing for a viable economy, globally. They are patronized by individuals in Africa and beyond, regardless of their social, economic, or political status. African prints portray the rich culture of Africa and provide a sense of belonging in society. Chichi, Howard, and Baines (2016:8) identified brand loyalty, quality, symbolism, cultural significance, design ingenuity, and the adaptability of print designs to fashion styles, as well as certain design features, such as colour scheme, pattern size, and layout as factors influencing the marketability and acceptability of African prints locally and internationally.

Nigeria is a major fashion market in sub-Saharan Africa and African print fabrics stands out as one fabric generally accepted across most ethnic groups in Nigeria particularly among the Yoruba in Southwest Nigeria (Kalilu and Adeoti, 2023:233). Fashion in Southwest Nigeria is known for preservation of traditional values harmonized with contemporary influences. This shapes the fashion preferences of people in this region. African prints have a deep-rooted history in Nigeria. These fabrics are used for both casual and ceremonial purposes (Adeloye, Akinbogun and Ogunduyile, 2023:34). Fashion choices are not made in isolation. They are linked to the social and cultural environment in which individuals exist. In Nigeria, fashion choices, including the preference for specific African prints, are influenced by cultural traditions, religious beliefs, and social norms (Essel, 2017:41). Chichi, Howard, and Baines (2016:7) noted that globalization and digital media have introduced a varieties of styles and trends, shaping the preferences of younger generations while simultaneously influencing the choices of elderly.

Essel (2017:41), Adeloye, Akinbogun, and Ogunduyile (2023:39) and Kalilu and Adeoti (2023:238) among other scholars have investigated how fashion choices in Nigeria are shaped by religion, tradition, and social class. However, most studies focus on generalized national trends without specific interest on consumer motivations across demographic segments and age groups. It is important to understand the perception of African print users across age groups so as to facilitate the production of user-centric designs. This study contributes to the textile and fashion industry by offering insights that can inform prod-

uct development, marketing strategies, and cultural branding. It also extends to the field of consumer behavior by examining how cultural heritage and contemporary influences intersect to shape fashion preferences. This study holds potential relevance for designers, manufacturers, and policymakers in the textile industry.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are to:

1. Compare the perceptions of African print users across different age groups in South-west Nigeria
2. Highlight the preferences of African print users across different age groups in Nigeria.
3. Explore in-depth consumer motivations behind African print preferences across age groups

Hypothesis

H0: There is no significant difference in the perception that African print fabrics are suitable for all age groups across

Literature Review

Historical Significance of African Prints in Nigeria

African prints commonly referred to as Ankara by the Yoruba people in Southwest Nigeria, have a deep-rooted historical significance in Nigeria's rich culture. The origins of these prints can be traced back to Indonesian batik, which European traders introduced to West Africa in the 19th century. Over time, African print designers have infused these imported fabrics with local motifs and designs, creating a unique blend that aligns with the cultural diversity of the region (Adeloje, Ogunduyile and Akinbogun, 2022:36). During the colonial era, European textile companies started producing imitation wax prints to meet the growing demand in West Africa. These prints were cheaper than the Indonesian originals which made them accessible to a wider scope of consumers. Despite being of foreign origin, these fabrics became symbols of African identity. The vibrant patterns and bold colors of African prints were embraced by various ethnic groups in Nigeria which led a cultural synthesis where traditional African aesthetics merged with foreign imports (Chichi, Howard and Baines, 2016:8).

African prints quickly became an integral medium for African identity and cultural expression. They became woven into the fabric of Nigerian society, adorning individuals during significant ceremonies, rites of passage, and everyday life. African prints often carry specific meanings and symbols, reflecting the wearer's cultural heritage, marital status, or social standing. These fabrics are also powerful mediums for storytelling and cultural preservation (Uqalo, 2015:24). In post-colonial Nigeria, the textile industry boomed, and African prints played a crucial role in economic empowerment as African print mills were established in different locations in the country. Local entrepreneurs seized the opportunity, establishing textile businesses that catered to the growing demand for these prints. This entrepreneurial drive influenced the emergence of a vibrant fashion industry, creating jobs and contributing significantly to the country's economy (Adeloje, 2021:100). In recent times, there has been a resurgence of interest in African prints both within Nigeria and globally. Contemporary fashion designers have embraced African prints, integrating them into modern designs and runway collections. This promotes Nigeria's cultural heritage and also fosters a sense of national identity and pride.

Cultural and Societal Influences on Fashion Preferences

Fashion preferences are multifaceted, shaped by different factors including cultural and societal influences. Nigeria is home to over 250 ethnic groups, each with its unique customs and traditional attire. Cultural diversity significantly impacts fashion preferences, with individuals often expressing their cultural identity through clothing (Grant and Stephen, 2005:53). Traditional garments, such as African prints, Yoruba Aso Oke or the Igbo Isiagu, are not merely pieces of clothing but powerful symbols of cultural pride and heritage. These garments often find their way into contemporary fashion, reflecting the fusion of tradition and modernity. Ceremonial events such as weddings, festivals, and religious celebrations, play a major role in shaping fashion preferences. Traditional ceremonies often dictate specific dress codes, leading to a demand for culturally significant attire (Atthaphon and Patcha, 2022:122).

The increase in the use of media, especially television, social media, and fashion magazines, has a profound impact on shaping fashion preferences (Adelaja, Salusso and Black, 2016:5). Nigerian youth, in particular, are heavily influenced by global fashion trends shared through digital platforms. Social media influencers and celebrities often set trends, leading to the adoption of specific styles, fabrics, and patterns. This globalization of fashion creates a dynamic synergy between traditional Nigerian fashion and contemporary global influences (Jin and Black, 2012:5).

Economic status also significantly influences fashion choices. Affluent individuals often prefer designer labels and high-end fashion while those with limited financial resources opt for affordable, mass-produced clothing. This economic inequality creates a diverse fashion strata, where both traditional handmade garments and factory-produced clothing coexist. The growth of the fashion industry in Nigeria has led to the availability of a wide range of clothing options, catering to various economic backgrounds and tastes (Nwafor, 2011:55).

Fashion preferences evolve across generations with younger individuals often embracing modern styles that blend traditional elements with contemporary designs. The younger generation's exposure to global fashion trends, coupled with their desire for self-expression, leads to innovative fashion choices. In contrast, older generations often maintain a stronger connection to traditional attire, valuing the preservation of cultural heritage through their clothing choices (Oyedele and Babatunde, 2013:168).

Consumer Behavior and Fashion Preferences in Nigeria

Understanding consumer behavior and fashion preferences in Nigeria is crucial for businesses, designers, and policymakers aiming to cater to the diverse and dynamic fashion market in the country. Nigerian consumers exhibit unique patterns of behavior influenced by cultural, social, economic, and psychological factors. Nigeria's diverse cultural heritage profoundly influences consumer preferences. Traditional attire, rich in symbolism and history, remains a significant choice for various occasions. Cultural pride often drives consumers to opt for garments representing their ethnic backgrounds, leading to a thriving market for traditional textiles like Aso Oke, Ankara, and Adire (Udegbe, 2017:5).

Consumer spending in Nigeria is stratified based on income levels. Affluent consumers often prefer luxury brands and designer wear, showcasing their social status and affluence.

In contrast, middle-income and lower-income consumers opt for more affordable options, leading to a thriving market for mass-produced, cost-effective fashion (Durmaz, Celik and Orac, 2019:112).

Fashion serves as a powerful medium for self-expression in Nigeria. Consumers use clothing and accessories to express their personalities, beliefs, and aspirations. Younger generations, especially, embrace individualism, experimenting with eclectic styles that blend traditional and contemporary elements. This desire for self-expression fuels a constant demand for unique, personalized fashion items (Arnold and Thomson, 2015:212). The rise of social media platforms has transformed consumer behavior in Nigeria. Influencers and celebrities on platforms like Instagram and TikTok heavily impact fashion trends. Consumers often emulate the styles of their favorite influencers, leading to the rapid diffusion of trends and a high demand for specific clothing items showcased online (Udegbe, 2017:6).

Factors Influencing African Print Preference in Nigeria

African prints serve as a powerful symbol of cultural heritage and identity in Nigeria. Different ethnic groups have distinct textile traditions, and individuals often choose prints that reflect their cultural background. The choice of specific patterns and motifs can signify one's tribe, heritage, or even social status, making cultural identity a fundamental factor in African print preference (Adeloye, 2021; Adeoti, 2023).

Traditional ceremonies and events play a significant role in driving African print preference. Events like weddings, festivals, and cultural celebrations often necessitate the use of specific prints and designs. Tradition dictates attire choices, making African prints a popular and essential choice for such occasions. The ceremonial significance attached to these prints enhances their demand and relevance (Essel, 2017:48).

Socio-economic status significantly influences African print preference. Affluent people might opt for expensive African print fabrics, emphasizing their social status and financial capacity. Middle-income consumers often choose mid-range options, while those with lower incomes prefer affordable, cheap prints. Socio-economic factors also impact the choice between handmade traditional prints and factory-produced designs (Uqalo, 2015:30).

Fashion trends, often disseminated through social media, celebrities, and fashion influencers, greatly influence consumer choices. Popular figures showcasing African prints in innovative ways or endorsing specific designs can spark trends. Consumers use clothing, including African prints, as a means of self-expression. Individual tastes, style preferences, and comfort are vital factors. Some individuals prefer bold and vibrant prints, while others opt for more subtle designs. Personal preferences, influenced by personality traits, experiences, and aspirations, guide consumers in choosing specific African print garments that resonate with their identity (Adepeko et al, 2023:79).

Perceived quality, including factors like fabric durability, colourfastness, and overall comfort, greatly impacts preferences. Consumers tend to favour prints made from high-quality materials, ensuring longevity and comfort during wear. Positive past experiences with specific brands or designers can also influence future choices, creating brand loyalty and trust among consumers (Kalilu and Adeoti, 2023:130).

Methodology

This study employed a mixed-methods approach to examine consumer perceptions and preferences for African print fabrics across age groups in South-West Nigeria. The methodological stages are presented and justified below.

Research Design

A mixed-methods research design was adopted, combining quantitative survey methods with qualitative focus-group inquiry. The quantitative component provided systematic measures of socio-demographic characteristics and stated perceptions and preferences, suitable for statistical testing, while the qualitative component offered depth and context, revealing motivations and interpretations that lie beyond closed-ended items. This design was chosen to ensure that the findings are statistically robust and also supported with qualitative narratives from selected respondents. The approach ensured that the research did not rely solely on quantitative measures, but also harnessed the depth of qualitative evidence to provide a more credible data for the research.

Research Population

The study population comprised consumers of African print fabrics in the six states of South-West Nigeria: Lagos, Ogun, Oyo, Osun, Ondo, and Ekiti.

Sample Size Determination

The sample size for this study was determined using an online sample size calculator (Raosoft Sample Size Calculator). Since there is no official record of the total number of African print consumers in South-Western Nigeria, the target population size was treated as large and undefined. The following parameters were applied: a 95% confidence level, a 5% margin of error, and an estimated response distribution of 50%. These parameters were selected to maximise statistical reliability and ensure a feasible sample size for fieldwork. Based on these settings, the online calculator recommended a minimum sample size of 384 respondents. Therefore, 384 respondents were sampled for this study.

Sampling Technique and Procedure

Due to the broad geographic coverage of South-West Nigeria and the desire to reach a dispersed population of African print consumers, the primary mode of administration was online distribution of the questionnaire. Links to the survey were shared via social media platforms to facilitate wide and cost-effective reach. Respondents were those with internet access and a willingness to complete the survey, potentially skewing the sample toward more digitally active consumers. Younger respondents, particularly those aged 21–30 years were more represented, reflecting their higher social media usage and greater likelihood of engaging with online surveys. Given this response pattern, the study treated age group as an independent variable of interest rather than a controlled quota variable. The online sampling approach was selected because it ensured wide coverage and was cost-effective, even though it limited strict proportionality in age representation.

Data Collection Instruments

Two main instruments were used to collect primary data for this study: online questionnaire and focus group discussion. The questionnaire was designed to gather information on respondents' socio-demographic characteristics as well as their perceptions and preferenc-

es for African print fabrics. It consisted of both categorical items and five-point Likert scale statements, enabling quantitative analysis of attitudes and preferences. The focus group discussion was used to complement the survey by eliciting richer, qualitative insights. These instruments were carefully selected to ensure they captured both measurable trends and deeper, context-specific perspectives relevant to the study.

The research instruments were validated to ensure accuracy and reliability. Content validity was established through expert review by specialists in textile design and consumer behaviour who assessed the clarity, relevance, and coverage of the items. Based on their feedback, adjustments were made to improve question wording and alignment with the study objectives. A pilot test involving 20 respondents was conducted to evaluate the clarity, usability, and timing of the questionnaire, leading to further refinements. Reliability analysis using Cronbach's Alpha produced a coefficient of 0.86, this indicates strong internal consistency of the scale. These steps ensured that the instruments were both valid and reliable for capturing respondents' perceptions and preferences on African print fabrics.

Data Processing and Analysis

Quantitative data from the online questionnaires were downloaded from Google Forms into Microsoft Excel, cleaned to remove incomplete responses, and then imported into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) for analysis. Descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, and mean scores were used to summarise socio-demographic characteristics and identify general trends in perceptions and preferences. Hypothesis testing was carried out using the Kruskal–Wallis H test for differences in ordinal perception scores across age groups. For the qualitative component, data were obtained through focus group discussions. Due to the participants' preference, detailed note-taking was used to capture participants' responses. The notes were then reviewed, organised, and analysed thematically using narrative method. Triangulation of the quantitative and qualitative results was performed to ensure a richer and more credible interpretation of the study's outcomes.

Ethical Considerations

This study adhered to established ethical standards throughout its design and implementation. All participants were fully informed about the objectives, procedures, and potential implications of the research before taking part. Participation was entirely voluntary, and respondents were free to withdraw at any stage without any negative consequence. Anonymity and confidentiality were strictly maintained. No personal identifiers were included in the dataset, and all responses were reported in aggregate form to prevent the identification of individuals. The study also observed cultural sensitivity, ensuring that questions were phrased appropriately and that participation did not cause discomfort or offence.

Results

Socio-Cultural and Economic Life of South-West Nigeria

South West Nigeria is predominantly inhabited by the Yoruba ethnic group, one of the largest and most culturally influential groups in West Africa (Adepeko et al, 2023:76). The region comprises of six states, namely; Lagos, Ogun, Oyo, Osun, Ondo, and Ekiti. Yoruba society is deeply rooted in communal values and respect for age and hierarchy. Festivals such as the

Osun-Osogbo Festival, Eyo Festival, and various Egungun masquerade celebrations reveals that the Yoruba people in South West Nigeria have value for artistic heritage. Researches proof that, South West Nigeria is one of the most commercially advanced regions in Nigeria, with Lagos serving as Nigeria's economic hub and a major West African trade centre. The economy is diverse, comprising of commerce, manufacturing, services, agriculture, and the creative industry.

Socio-Demographic Data of Respondents

The study involved 384 respondents from South-West Nigeria. Figure 1 shows that most participants were between 21–30 years (53.6%), followed by those aged 14–20 years (18.0%) and 31–40 years (15.9%), with smaller proportions in the 41–50 years (5.5%) and above 50 years (6.8%) categories. The gender distribution was fairly balanced, with 51.3% male and 47.9% female respondents. Respondents were drawn from all six states in the region, though Ondo State (41.4%) and Lagos State (28.6%) had the highest representation, while Osun (4.4%) recorded the least. Educational attainment was generally high, with 59.1% holding a Bachelor's degree, 17.2% a Master's degree, 13.0% an SSCE, 8.1% a Diploma, and 2.3% a PhD.

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percent
Age	14-20	69	18.0
	21-30	206	53.6
	31-40	61	15.9
	41-50	21	5.5
	Above 50	26	6.8
Gender	Male	197	51.3
	Female	184	47.9
State	Ondo	159	41.4
	Ekiti	30	7.8
	Osun	17	4.4
	Ogun	31	8.1
	Lagos	110	28.6
	Oyo	37	9.6
Qualification	SSCE	50	13.0
	Diploma	31	8.1
	BSc	227	59.1
	MSc	66	17.2
	PhD	9	2.3

Figure 1. Table of the Socio-Demographic Data of Respondents. Source: Researcher's Fieldwork, 2019.

It can be inferred from the above table that respondents from all states in South-West Nigeria and across all age groups were represented, with a relatively balanced gender distribution and a high level of educational attainment. However, the representation across age groups and states was uneven, largely due to the online administration of the questionnaire, which favoured responses from more digitally active populations.

Comparison of Perceptions of Consumers of African prints across the Sampled Age Groups in Southwest Nigeria

Figure 2 reveals that the love for African prints cuts across the sampled age groups as the mean scores show that they all strongly agreed that they love African prints. Respondents across all the age groups also strongly agreed that African prints are highly fashionable and attractive. The mean scores from Figure 2 show that respondents in all the age groups agreed that African prints are suitable for all social gatherings. None of the age groups strongly agreed that African prints are suitable for all social gatherings. Respondents in all the age groups strongly agreed that African prints are suitable for all age groups and social statuses. However, respondents between 14- 20 years old and 21-30 years old were neutral about the price of African prints, this is probably because respondents within this age groups are still largely dependent on parents and guardians while those between 31-40 years, 41-50 years and those above 50 years disagreed that African prints are expensive. This suggests that they believe the prices they purchase the fabrics are fair. Respondents across the age groups are neutral about foreign African prints being better than the indigenous ones, however respondents above 50 years old agreed that foreign African prints are more durable.

Variables	14-20	21-30	31-40	41-50	Above 50
Love for Ankara	4.3	4.3	4.2	4.3	4.5
Highly Fashionable	4.4	4.4	4.4	4.6	4.4
Attractive	4.3	4.4	4.3	4.4	4.3
Suitable for all Social gatherings	3.6	4.0	3.9	3.7	4.0
Suitable for all age groups	4.4	4.4	4.3	4.3	4.3
Suitable for all social Statuses	4.3	4.3	4.3	4.5	4.5
Expensive	2.8	2.8	2.6	2.3	2.5
Foreign designs are better	2.9	2.9	2.6	2.7	2.9
Foreign designs are more durable	3.0	3.1	3.0	3.1	3.5
Foreign fabrics are cheaper	2.5	2.7	2.4	2.2	2.4

Figure 2. Comparison of Perceptions of Consumers of African prints across the Sampled Age Groups in Southwest Nigeria. Source: Researcher's Fieldwork, 2019.

Figure 2 clearly shows that respondents across the sampled age groups have similar perceptions about African prints. There is no area of strong divergence in their perceptions about African prints. Consumers of African prints across all age groups have positive perceptions about African prints. It could also be deduced that consumers across the age groups do not rate foreign fabrics better than indigenous ones in terms of design, quality and price except for respondents above fifty years old that are of the opinion that foreign African prints are more durable.

The similarities in the perception of African print users about African prints across all age groups is probably because African print is generally accepted by users across all age groups. However, African print users above 50 years old have a slightly different view from others about the durability of foreign African fabric. This is most likely due to a higher level of familiarity with indigenous and foreign African prints.

Comparison of Preferences of Consumers of African prints across the Sampled Age Groups
Figure 3 shows that respondents between 14-20 years old and those above 50 years old are neutral about their level of knowledge of African prints while those between the ages of 21-30, 31-40 and 41-50 agreed to be knowledgeable about African prints. Respondents between 41-50 years old strongly agreed that they are interested in the brand of African fabrics they use while the other age groups simply agreed. Respondents across all the age group agreed that they are more interested in the designs of African prints than the brands. Respondents between 14-20 years old agreed to love designs with dark colours while respondents in other age groups were neutral about the use of dark colours for African print designs. Respondents in all the age groups agreed to love designs with bright colours. Respondents between 14-20 years old agreed to love African print designs with bright colours while the other age groups were neutral about the use of bright colours in African print designs. Respondents between 14-20 years old and those between 21-30 years old agreed to love African prints with cultural designs while others were neutral about their preference for cultural designs. Respondents between the age of 40 and 50 were neutral about their preference for bold motifs and wax effect on African prints while others agreed to prefer designs with bold motifs and wax effects. Respondents in all the age groups agreed to love African print designs with Adire designs. Respondents across all the age groups were neutral about their preference for foreign brands of African prints.

Variables	14-20	21-30	31-40	41-50	Above 50
Knowledge of African prints	3.2	3.6	3.9	3.6	3.4
Interested in Brand	3.6	3.6	3.7	4.3	4.1
Interested in Design than brand	4.0	4.0	3.7	3.9	3.7
Love dark colours	3.6	3.3	2.9	2.7	2.7
Love bright colours	3.6	3.6	3.5	3.7	3.8
Love cultural designs	3.9	3.8	3.4	3.4	2.7
Bold motifs	3.6	3.8	3.5	3.2	3.6
Wax effect	3.5	3.7	3.5	3.4	3.8
Adire imitation	3.6	3.7	3.7	3.9	3.6
Country of Production	2.8	2.6	2.8	2.6	3.0
Prefer foreign brands	2.7	2.7	2.7	2.7	2.7

Figure 3. Table comparing the Preferences of Consumers of African prints across the Sampled Age Groups. Source: Researcher's Fieldwork, 2019.

The table in figure 3 shows the level of agreement and divergence of opinions in preferences for African prints. All the respondents across the age groups are relatively knowledgeable about African prints. However, respondents between the ages of 31 – 40 are the

most knowledgeable about African prints while those between 14-20 years are the least knowledgeable. This is probably because most African print users between the age of 14 and 20 years are still dependent on their parents or guardians to make their fabric choices for them while those in their middle adulthood (31-40 years) are in the position to make decisions about choice of fabric for themselves, their children and friends. This tends to enhance their knowledge about African prints. Older consumers are more interested in brands than the younger consumers. This could be closely linked with their level of experience with different brands. However, they all indicated high level of preference for designs over brands. Younger consumers prefer designs with dominating dark colours while older consumers do not particularly pay attention to designs with dominating dark colours. This could be because older consumers look beyond colours to make design choices. As discussed earlier, they are more knowledgeable about African prints and also more interested in brands than the younger consumers. Respondents across all age groups love African print designs with bright colours. The love for cultural designs appears to gradually decrease with age as Table 2 shows that consumers between 14-20 years and 21-30 years love designs with cultural motifs, those between 31-40 and 41-50 years old are neutral and those above 50 years old are the least interested in designs with cultural motifs. This is probably because African print is a convenient textile material through which young people showcase culture unlike the older generations that are convenient with other alternatives like Aso-oke. Consumers across the age groups relatively love bold motifs except for those between 41-50 years old that are indifferent. Consumers across the age groups relatively love wax effect and adire imitation. However, consumers above 50 years are the most interested in wax effect while those between 41-50 years old are the most interested in adire imitation. This is probably because wax effect is a major feature of the African print designs that were originally introduced to Nigeria (Uqalo, 2015) and the indigenous nature of Adire designs makes its imitation on African prints more appealing to older consumers. All age groups are neutral about preference for foreign brands. They do not focus on the country of production of African prints. This could be because the quality of African prints and designs is not dependent on country of production.

Consumer Motivations Behind African Print Fabric Preferences Across Age Groups

To explore in-depth motivations behind consumer preferences for African print fabric, a single focus group was conducted with ten participants, comprising two individuals from each of the age categories. The group comprised of five females and five males, both genders were represented in all age categories. The result of the focus group is presented using narrative analysis. The narrative themes include Identity and cultural belonging, fashion, symbolism, economic and brand consideration and sentiments.

Identity and Cultural Belonging

A nineteen years old female said wearing African print fabric enables her to identify with her roots, though she likes foreign clothes. A fifty-three year old male, speaking for the older generation said that growing up, they used to wear prints to all kinds of celebration such as naming ceremonies, church anniversaries and birthdays among others. He described African print fabric as one fabric that felt truly indigenous. The younger participants linked their use of African prints with a reconnection to cultural identity while the older participants offered historical continuity in their narratives. They told stories associating prints with family rituals, traditional values, and long-standing community pride. Their narratives suggest that African print fabrics function as cultural item across age groups.

Fashion

A twenty-four years old female stated that she likes mixing African print fabrics with jeans or crop tops, she believes this combination makes her more youthful while a forty-six years old female said she cannot wear African print fabrics with anything but a matching blouse. She claims that is how she was taught, and she is more comfortable using it like that. The 21–30 age group presented hybrid fashion narratives, blending African prints fabrics with Western styling. Their fashion stories reflect a desire for creativity and individuality. On the other hand, the 41–50 group emphasized cultural appropriateness. Their stories centered on preserving what they believe as the right way of wear African prints. The younger consumers aim to modernize African prints fabrics, while older consumers preserve the cultural way of styling the fabric.

Symbolism

A thirty-six years old male noted that he when he wears certain motifs, he remembers his grandmother because some patterns remind him of old times spent with her. A fifty-five years old female was of the opinion that bold motifs are more culturally significant because they are not just designs but communicative. Among respondents above 30 years, narratives were rich in symbolic references. They spoke of certain motifs representing proverbs, ethnic origins, or social class. African print fabrics were described as fabrics with coded messages. Younger groups, however, rarely mentioned symbolism. They emphasized visual appeal and colours.

Economic and Brand Considerations

A twenty-two years old male said that he does not consider brands but buys what looks good and affordable. On the other hand, A 50 years old male emphasized on the importance of quality, he however stated that quality is not absolutely dependent on country of origin but quality of production. He noted that he knows how to identify quality African print fabrics. The 14–30 age groups displayed economic rationality. Their preferences centered on cost and accessibility not brand identity. They are of the opinion that, African prints are fashion commodities, valued more for how they look than where they come from. However, Participants above forty years revealed brand-informed loyalty and historical trust. Their choices are informed by long-standing relationships with certain sellers, knowledge of fabric origin, and quality expectations. These findings suggest that motivations around value differ, younger participants focus on affordability and design, while older participants focus on durability and brand trust.

Sentiment

A thirty-three years old female, said she has an African Print wrapper given to her by her mother when she entered the university that she still wears. Although, it is old, it is special. A fifty years old male stated that the African print fabrics used as uniform by guests during his wedding added colour to the event and he kept extra pieces for his daughters. African print fabrics were described to be more than mere clothes but as symbols of emotion, linked to life events like weddings, funerals, and naming ceremonies among others. Participants across all age groups shared this sentiment, but older participants placed more emphasis on preservation and continuity, while younger ones were more focused on current associations.

Hypothesis Test

Inferential analysis was carried out to test the research hypothesis that there is no significant difference in the perception that African print fabrics are suitable for all age groups across. The analysis tested to affirm if there are statistically significant differences in the perception that African print fabrics are suitable for all age groups. Respondents were grouped into five distinct age categories: 14–20 years, 21–30 years, 31–40 years, 41–50 years, and above 50 years. Responses were measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (5), thus producing ordinal data appropriate for non-parametric analysis.

Given the ordinal nature of the variable and the independent nature of the age categories, the Kruskal–Wallis H test was used as a better alternative to one-way ANOVA, which would have required the assumption of normally distributed data. This non-parametric test compares the distribution of ranks between groups to assess whether they originate from the same population. The Kruskal–Wallis H test result is shown in Figure 4 below.

Test Statistics ^{a,b}	
	Ankara fabrics are suitable for all age groups
Kruskal-Wallis H	4.541
Df	4
Asymp. Sig.	.338
a. Kruskal Wallis Test	
b. Grouping Variable: AgeRange	

Figure 4. The Kruskal–Wallis H test results. Source: Researcher's Fieldwork, 2019.

The test produced a Kruskal–Wallis H statistic of 4.541 with 4 degrees of freedom and an associated p-value of 0.338. Since the p-value exceeded the 0.05 threshold, the null hypothesis could not be rejected. This outcome indicates that there are no statistically significant differences in the distribution of perception scores across the different age groups. It can therefore be deduced from the test that respondents across all age groups expressed similar levels of agreement that African print fabrics are suitable for all age groups.

Discussion

The findings of this study reveal a high level of uniformity in the use of African print fabrics across different age groups in Southwest Nigeria. Across all sampled age categories, ranging from 14–20 years to above 50 years, respondents expressed strong agreement on core attributes such as love for African prints, their fashionable nature, and their attractiveness. The high mean scores for these variables suggest that African print fabrics occupies a central place in the cultural and aesthetic consciousness of consumers across generations. This aligns with the assertions of Uqalo (2015) and Essel (2017) who argued that African prints serve more as cultural emblems that transcend age barriers than as a mere article of clothing. It is also worth noting that the result revealed the absence of statistically significant differences in perceptions of age-suitability in the use of African print fabrics, as confirmed by the Kruskal–Wallis H test ($H = 4.541$, $p = .338$). This suggests that African print fabrics are accepted as appropriate attire for all age groups, highlighting their

role as an intergenerational cultural artifact. The finding resonates with Adelaye (2021), who described African prints as a democratic fabrics in the sense that they are worn by people of all ages, social classes, and for varied occasions. This is further supported by the focus group discussions, which reveal consistent themes of identity, cultural belonging, and sentimental attachment across generations.

The result also revealed that although the broad perception is similar, some differences emerged in the detailed preference patterns. Younger consumers (14–20 and 21–30 years) showed greater affinity for cultural motifs, this can be linked to the role of African prints in youth identity construction and cultural expression. This finding aligns with the submission of Chichi et al (2016), which suggests that younger people often adopt traditional fabrics as fashion statements to blend modernity and tradition. The older respondents however demonstrated higher brand consciousness and a stronger interest in durability attributes likely shaped by long-term experience and established trust in certain manufacturers or sellers, a tendency documented in (Oyedele and Babatunde, 2013). The low mean scores for preference for foreign brands and country of production corroborate Uqalo (2015) submission which found that the quality of design and fabric finishing, rather than geographic origin, is the key determinant of consumer choice.

The symbolic dimension of African prints appears more salient for older participants, who attach specific meanings to motifs and patterns, drawing on historical and cultural references. In contrast, younger participants tend to focus more on aesthetic appeal and fashion versatility, often blending prints with Western attire to create hybrid styles. This generational difference in symbolic engagement reflects broader shifts in African textile consumption documented by Adelaja et al (2016), where the communicative values embedded in patterns are increasingly reduced to fashion sensibilities among younger consumers. Economic considerations further differentiate age groups: younger consumers are more price-sensitive and driven by affordability and trendiness, while older groups prioritize quality and durability, even at higher costs. This mirrors findings by (Arnold and Thomson, 2015), who noted that in emerging markets, income level and life stage significantly influence textile purchase motivations.

The findings suggest that African print fabrics have a positive perception across age groups in Southwest Nigeria. However, there are subtle differences in motivations, colour preferences, symbolic engagement, and brand consciousness. These differences hold strategic implications for textile designers and marketers. Promotional campaigns can confidently emphasize the universal suitability of African prints, while also tailoring specific messages, highlighting cultural symbolism and durability for older consumers, and fashion versatility, affordability, and vibrant designs for younger audiences.

Conclusion

The factors influencing African print preference in Nigeria are multifaceted and interconnected. Cultural heritage, social and economic status, fashion trends, personal preferences, and perceived quality collectively shape consumer choices. It can be concluded that there is a striking consensus among respondents from various age groups regarding their perceptions of African prints. Users of African print across all age groups have positive attitude towards African prints, indicating a shared appreciation and acceptance for African print fabrics across generations. African print users across different age brackets do not exhibit

significant divergence in their opinions about African prints in terms of design, quality, and price. This suggests that the appeal for African prints transcends age-related preferences.

In terms of African print preference across age groups, it can be deduced from the research that older consumers place a higher emphasis on established brands, possibly driven by their extensive experience with different brands. However, the study emphasized that regardless of age, the majority of respondents prioritize designs over brands, underlining importance of creativity in African print production. Younger consumers are drawn to designs dominated by dark colors, while older consumers are drawn to African print designs with bright colours. Interestingly, the research indicated that the affinity for cultural motifs diminishes with age, suggesting that the younger generation are now interested in showcasing their cultural heritage through Indigenous textiles like African prints. The research revealed that regardless of age, respondents do not prioritize the country of production, this suggests that country of origin is not a major determinant of the quality and design of African prints.

It is worthy of note that this study has some limitations. The use of an online survey as the primary data collection method resulted in uneven representation across states and age groups, with younger, more digitally active respondents being more represented. This limited the generalizability of the findings of older or less digitally engaged populations. Qualitative data from the focus group discussion were captured through note-taking rather than audio recording based on participants preference, which, despite careful documentation, may have limited the completeness of the narratives obtained. The cross-sectional nature of the study captures preferences at a single point in time and may not account for evolving trends in African print consumption influenced by seasonal fashions or cultural shifts.

Recommendations

The researcher recommends that African print designers should focus on creating contemporary designs that appeal to the younger consumer base while also incorporating classic patterns that older age groups can relate with. It is also recommended that African print designers should adopt user-centered design process in the production of African print fabrics so as to be able to meet the specific demands of consumers.

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