

CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT: TOWARDS SATISFYING TIE-DYE/BATIK CONSUMERS IN ABEOKUTA METROPOLIS

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ABSTRACT

In a highly competitive market, customers are vital asset for sustainable growth and good customer satisfaction/services will stimulate purchase intention. This study was carried out in Abeokuta among the consumers of tie-dye and batik fabrics with the aim of investigating consumers' satisfaction. Consumers of tie-dye/batik fabrics were randomly selected for the study. The consumers were contacted in local markets, schools, offices and social centres. Structured questionnaire was used to conduct interview with the consumers and the data were analyzed using descriptive statistics. Though poverty prevailed in Nigeria, the research findings reveals that tie-dye/batik practitioners in Abeokuta were not satisfying consumers' purchase expectations in product, relationship and services. Consequently, consumers were not willing to exchange their hard earned money for poor quality products and unsatisfactory services. The study revealed that the quality of tie-dye/batik fabrics was not meeting consumers expectations, and the practitioners have poor relationship with customers. This affects re-purchase intention (consumers' plan to buy tie-dye/batik fabrics at other times), low patronage of the product and result into a negative disconfirmation of tie-dye/batik fabrics. The study, however, recommends customers relationship management as an approach to identifying consumers pre and post purchase view of tie-dye/batik products/services in order for the practitioners to improve and satisfy the consumers.

Keywords: Tie-dye, batik, consumers' satisfaction, customer relationship management, Abeokuta.

INTRODUCTION

Tie-dye and batik are indigenous textiles mostly practiced by Yoruba women in Abeokuta, Ogun State, Nigeria. Tie-dye/batik is a resist dyeing technique of fabric embellishment. The resist dyeing technique is a process of protecting designed areas of the fabric from the penetration of dye to create light pattern on a dark background (Osinowo, 1996; Meilach, 1973). In tie-dye, the fabric is tied very tightly in parts with

string and then dyed (Oguntona, 1986; Osinowo, 1996; Meilach, 1973). This is called adire in Yoruba language meaning to tie and dye. The dye cannot penetrate beneath the strings. When one colour dyeing takes place, the parts that have been tied remain the original ground colour and the removal of the strings reveals a two-colour design. A multi-coloured facilitating design can be made by tying and untying specific areas (e.g. knotting, sewing, plaiting etc) after each suc-

cessive dyeing operation. A wooden rod (mallet) is used to beat the fabric smooth.

On the other hand, batik involves the application of fluid or semi-fluid substance, which solidifies on the fabric, making it impervious to dye penetration. In batik, the resist is obtained by applying hot wax to either sides or only one side of the fabric. Once removed, it gives the pattern or design on the fabric. The wax areas repel or resist dye penetration. In Abeokuta, tie-dye/ batik skill is considered as an inherited craft, which is learned from mother or relations and practiced mostly by women with little or no formal education. Tie-dye/ batik industry has contributed positively to the economy of the state and Nigeria as a whole; however, it is facing some challenges, which had affected the growth of the industry.

Challenges of tie-dye/batik industry

In 1997, Nigeria textile industry became a member of the World Trade Organisation (WTO). Consequently, the Federal Government lifted the ban on importation of textiles because of WTO agreement. The trade policy impacted negatively on the Nigerian textile industry resulting in an influx of cheap textiles from Asian countries especially China (Olori, 2003). According to Parrish *et al.* (2006), the ability to produce products efficiently at lower comparative cost by China is threatening the textiles and apparel industries that are unable to compete solely based on price.

Also, the domestic markets are facing major threats from smugglers of second-hand clothing from neighbouring countries. The neighbouring countries (Benin, Togo and Ghana) have no import restrictions on second-hand clothing because they generate

needed foreign revenues from import duties; thus, they are ready to supply intending buyers with goods (South African Institute on International Affairs SAIIA, 2007). Some scholars argued that indigenous textiles were more or less forced out by cheaper European imports. Similarly, Africa's productive weakness especially in the manufacturing led African consumers to depend on imported manufactured goods (Byfield, 2002). Unfortunately, this has created a serious threat to the local tie-dye/batik industries though "many consumers within Nigeria considered Abeokuta as the premier center of adire production" (Byfield, 2002). In order to address this issue, it will be vital to investigate if the local textile industries are meeting consumers' satisfaction and expectations.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Are consumers of tie-dye/batik in Abeokuta satisfied?

According to Oliver (1980), customer satisfaction is the attitude like feeling of a customer towards a product or service after it has been used. It is generally described as the full meeting of one's expectations. The concept of satisfaction is important because it is the essence of success in today's highly competitive world of business (Evans *et al.*, 2006). Customer satisfaction is a key influence in future purchases intentions. A satisfied customer is very likely to share his/her experience with others, thereby engaging in a positive word-of-mouth advertising. Similarly, a dissatisfied customer is likely to switch brands and/or complain, thereby engaging in negative word-of-mouth advertising (Shiv and Humber, 2000). Consumer satisfaction can be viewed with paradigm of pre-purchase expectations, post-purchase perceptions and disconfirmation. According to Peters and Olison (2005) pre-purchase ex-

Expectations are beliefs about anticipated performance of the product; post-purchase perceptions are the consumer's thought about how well the product performed while disconfirmation refers to the difference between the two (i.e., post-purchase perceptions are compared with pre-purchase expectations). When the perceived performance exceed a customer's expectation, (this is a positive disconfirmation), then the customer feels satisfied. On the other hand, if the perceived performance falls short of customer's expectations (this is a negative disconfirmation), then the customer feels dissatisfied while re-purchase intention refers to consumers' plan to buy the same product at other times. This study is aimed at using this model to investigate consumers' satisfaction of tie-dye/batik fab-

rics in Abeokuta metropolis. Consumers of tie-dye/batik are pertinent to this study; consequently 1117 consumers were randomly selected from the local markets, schools, offices and social centres. Structured questionnaire was used to conduct interview with the selected consumers. The consumers engage in various occupations/jobs; some are self employed (24.3%), civil servant (28.1%), private organization employee (8.1%), retired government/private worker (1.9%), graduate or youth corper (0.2%), clergymen (0.8%), apprentice (0.6%) and students (either in secondary, undergraduate or post-graduate levels, 35.3%) while 0.8% of the consumers keep their job identity confidential (Figure 1).

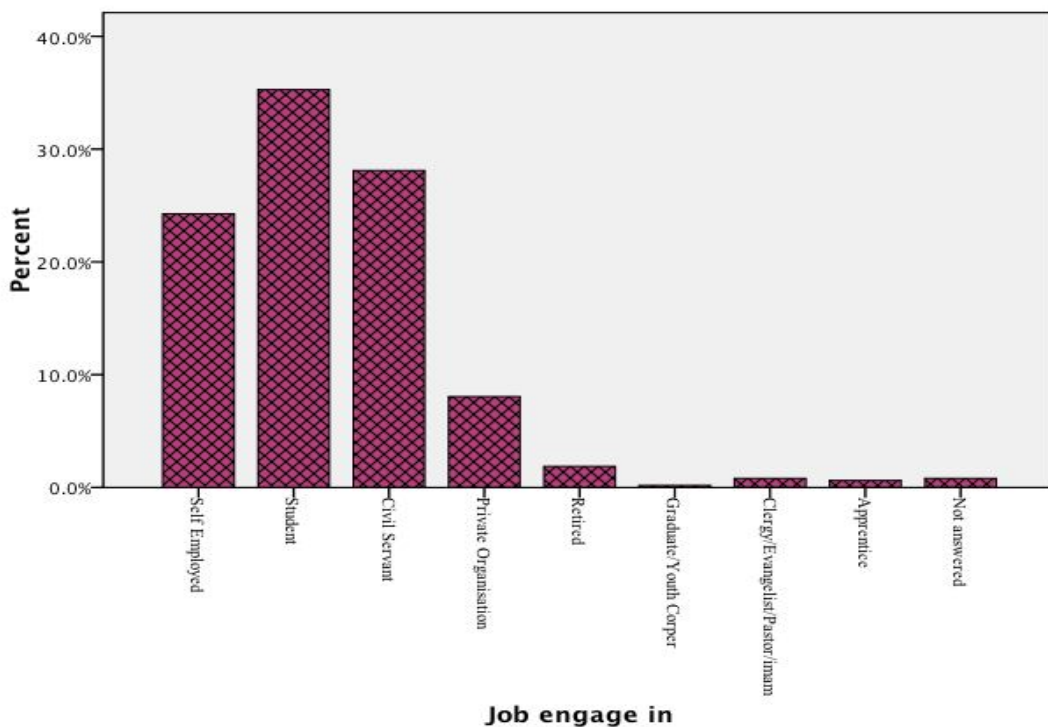


Fig.1: Job distribution of the sampled consumers

Table 1: Consumers' response to colour fastness and design of tie-dye and batik fabrics

Col-our Fast	Fre-quency	Percent-age	Cumula-tive	Design	Fre-quency	Percent-age	Cumula-tive
Yes	253	22.65	22.65	Com-mon	980	87.74	87.74
No	864	77.35	100.00	Unique	137	12.26	100.00
Total	1117	100.00		Total	1117	100.00	

However, from Table 3, most of the consumers remain skeptic in responding to re-purchase intention of tie-dye/batik fabrics (42.43%) while others are not interested in re-purchase of the fabrics (34.29%).

Table 2: Frequency Distribution of post-purchase expectations and re-purchase intension

Product meet expectation	Fre-quency	Percent-age	Cumula-tive Percent-age	Customers service meet expectations	Fre-quency	Percent-age	Cumula-tive percent-age
Yes	253	22.65	22.65	Yes	515	46.11	46.11
No	864	77.35	100.00	No	602	53.89	100.00
Total	1117	100.00		Total	1117	100.00	

Table 3: Consumers' re-purchase intension of tie-dye and batik fabrics

Re-purchase Intension	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Yes	260	23.28	23.28
Not sure	474	42.43	67.71
No	383	34.29	100.00
Total	1117	100.00	

Consumers would be more satisfied if dyers employ colour fast dyes in production and produce designs that are unique. This definitely affects the low patronage of tie-dye/batik fabrics. It is also important to mention that majority of the consumers complained of poor human relations experienced from tie-dye/batik practitioners (Table 4).

Figure 2 reveals the frequency distribution and graphical presentation of the frequency of purchase of tie-dye and batik fabrics among the selected consumers. More than one third of the consumers (33.9%) do not patronize tie-dye/batik fabrics; 30.5% buy tie-dye/batik fabric seasonally/during festival such as Muslim festive months, Christmas, New Year, etc) 20.0% buy the clothes

quarterly, while only 3.6% purchase tie-dye/batik fabric monthly. In general the frequency of purchase of clothes is very low. From personal communication with the consumers, most consumers emphasized the prevalent poverty in the country contributed to reduction in purchasing power. This is in line with an adage *ebi ki pa enia lo si ile alaso* meaning *a hungry man will not prefer to buy cloth*.

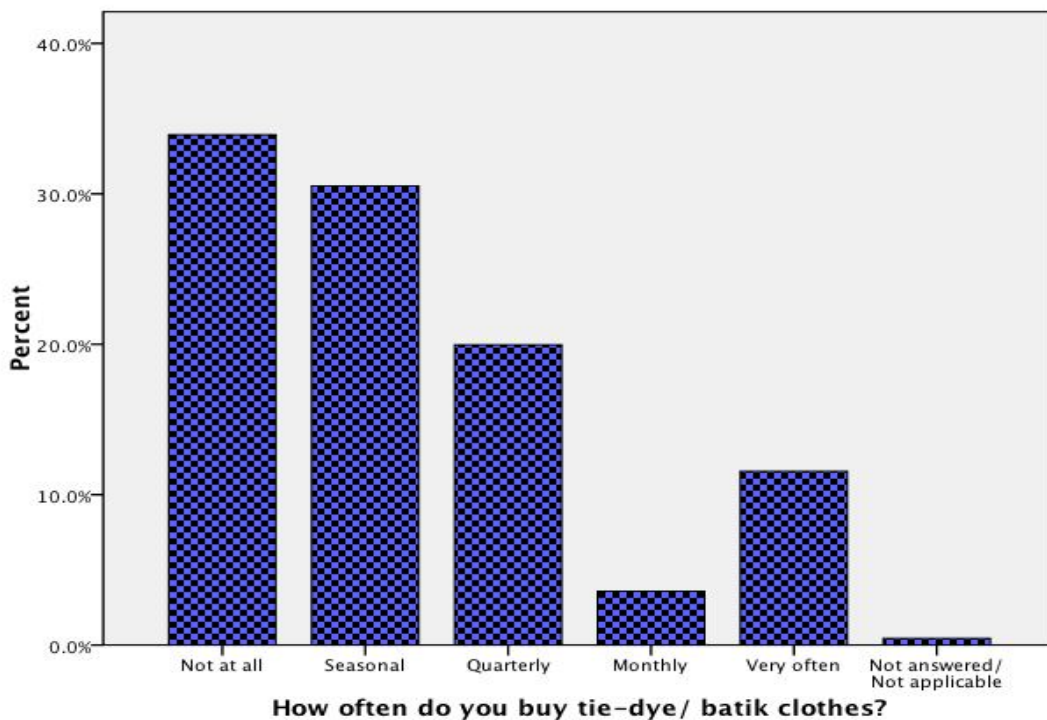


Fig.2: Frequency of purchase of tie-dye/batik fabrics

In spite of its popularity, the consumers noted that tie-dye/batik have some negative attributes such as wash fast of colour, and *too common* (frequently seen) designs. From the personal communication with the consumers, some of the consumers pointed out that the practitioners adopt beating of the fabric (striking the fabric with a mallet for smoothening to avoid washing off excess

dye) instead of using sufficient and quality dyestuff. According to the consumers, this affects the durability of the fabric making the cloth to look faded after the first wash. It can, however, be argued that, this will likely affect pre-and re-purchase of tie-dye/batik fabrics leading to negative disconfirmation as shown in Tables 1, 2 and 3.

Table 4: Human relations between the consumers and tie-dye/batik practitioners

Human relations	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative percent
Very good	28	2.51	2.51
Good	61	5.46	7.97
Fair	208	18.62	26.59
Poor	653	58.46	85.05
Very poor	167	14.95	100
TOTAL	1117	100.00	

According to most consumers, whenever they engage in window shopping or price bargaining (especially if the price does not favour the practitioner), often times tie-dye/batik practitioners raise abusive words such as *ole*, meaning *thief*, *wa gbe*, meaning *have it*, *ko ye kosan owo* meaning *you don't need to pay*, *ofe ni* meaning *its free*, *kori buruku lo* meaning *away with your mischief*, *kosi lo, osa ro* meaning *away with your evil omen, this early morning*, at times some even go to the extent of using local broom to sweep away the foot print of the consumer.

It is, however, very important that tie-dye/batik practitioners re-new (from abusive habit to a loving one) their relationship with customers, because keeping customers happy is a key to long-term viability and success of tie-dye/batik industries. This study, however, proposes Customer Relationship Management as an approach to retaining, acquiring, satisfying, consumers and stimulating purchase/re-purchase intentions.

According to a dye producing company (COLORADO, [www.bestdye.com/dyes-](http://www.bestdye.com/dyes-uses.php)

[uses.php](http://www.bestdye.com/dyes-uses.php)) reactive dyes are best for cotton or other plant materials because they are colour fast and wash fast; they are very good for tie-dyeing. However, various chemicals are used in dyeing with reactive dyes; sodium carbonate is a dye fixer that makes dyes become part of the fabric. The fabric is first soaked in a solution of dye fixer dissolved in water. In vat dyeing (which is commonly used by the practitioners), the dye fixer is added to the dye bath near the end of the dyeing process. Urea and Ludigol are also used in tie-dyeing but not in vat dyeing. Urea helps large amount of dye dissolve in small amount of water, it slowly starts to break down becoming gradually less effective. Ludigol is added to the dye to keep the dye from breaking down in water. It keeps the dye fresher and allows more dye to react with the fabric. Finally, synthrapol detergent is used to wash out loose dye after the fabric is dyed, and prevents them from staining other fabric. Training and re-training programme would be necessary for tie-dye/batik practitioners on improving the dye fastness properties of tie-dye/batik fabrics for customers' satisfaction. It is important to mention that further research would be necessary for the im-

provement of the fastness properties of local dyes.

Customer Relationship Management (CRM) is also called Customer Management; it is a business approach that seeks to create, develop and enhance relationships with carefully targeted customers in order to improve customer value and corporate profitability, thereby maximizing shareholder value (Payne, 2006). CRM is aimed at increasing the acquisition and retention of profitable customers by respectively initiating and improving relationship with them (Gupta and Lehman, 2005). According to Payne (2006) as industries have matured, there have been changes in market demand and competitive intensity that have led to a shift from transaction marketing (the act of negotiating or carrying out a business deal) to relationship marketing. Marketing on the basis of relationships concentrates attention on building customer value in order to retain them. By building on existing investment, in terms of product development and customer acquisition costs, firm can generate potentially higher revenue and profit at lower cost. Marketing on the basis of transactions by contrast involves greater financial outlay and risk. Relationship marketing is the development of long term and intimate relationships between the buyers and sellers. CRM is about achieving, maintaining and improving competitive strength by anticipating customers' future needs as well as satisfying their current requirements. It involves open communications and the ability to know the customer so well that changes in wants and needs could be anticipated before they become critical (West et al., 2006). In this context, tie-dye/batik practitioners should view customers as key business assets; consequently, the practitioners need to develop customer's relationship to improve

customer retention, acquisition and profitability.

It is very vital for the practitioners to develop intimate relationship with consumers through improved communication, evaluation of services and products provided, develop customers loyalty and encourage feedback from consumers. Bell (2002) emphasized that it is no longer sufficient to just have a relationship with your customer; you need to develop the love of your customers. Bell (2002) suggested seven (7Es) important steps in building customer love:

Enlistment- customers care when they share (the key is knowing exactly when and how to include customers, since bringing them as co-producers of a service make them more loyal).

Engagement is the power of straight talk (the company must find a way to listen to and talk straight with customers in such a way that customers believe that their input made a difference).

Enlightenment- this is growing customer love (educating and keeping customers up to date helps to build their loyalty and commitment).

Entrustment- affirming the covenant reliability is vital for trust, so to convince customers that you can be trusted, you must be seen as caring for them to get them to care for you.

Empowerment refers to customer control through consistency (customers feel in control when they have an offering that is consistent- keep the core offering intact).

Enchantment is making the process magical (engage in service which surprises adds the sizzling and not showing how, keep the mystery and builds devotion).

Endearment- giving without a toll or price (showing generosity to customers if backed by authenticity, says that you really care about them and are not just concerned with profit).

Tie-dye/batik practitioners should adopt these steps to build a lasting relationship with their customers. This will encourage feedback of consumers' opinion about tie-dye/batik fabrics and services. The consumers would be able to provide useful information for improvement. Bell further emphasized the benefits from achievement of customer's love to include: recommending the company/product to their friends, give helpful suggestions for improvement, are objective in their feedback, overlook mistakes and will pay more for what you offer because they feel that your offering is worth it.

CONCLUSION

Customers are the reasons for being in business; they are the most precious assets. Customers can be reliable source of ideas that could improve the quality of products/services rendered, but tie-dye/batik practitioners do not have a good relationship with them. The practitioners of tie-dye/batik fabrics should note that customers would vote their hard earned money in exchange of valued product and good customer services. In order to retain and acquire customers, tie-dye/batik practitioners should recognize that customers deserve recognition and respect. Good customers relationship will maintain good channels of communication, encourage suggestions for im-

provement, stimulate re-purchase intention, and customers will prefer to enter into a relationship with one who listens and helps to meet their need. It is, however, important for tie-dye/batik practitioners to value consumers and treat them with respect and dignity because customers are asset for sustainable growth of tie-dye/batik industry.

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