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Fashion Entrepreneurship: Challenges and the Prospect Opportunities in Skills Acquisition of 3D Digital Fashion

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ABSTRACT

Entrepreneurship in fashion Industry is a substantial issue, since the fashion business is facing challenges of competition in the fashion market. The challenges of struggling to provide adequate services and delightful fashion products has caused setback in the fashion Industry. Researchers explain that 70% are manual production with the use of cardboard, scissors and tape rule that is time wasting and most times are poorly executed. Most of the business enterprises expected profit in the business but impatience drives most out of the business, due to low patronage of a particular products. The Paper therefore recommends the use of 3D Fashion equipment to improve the entrepreneurship fashion industries in particular and Textiles family at large.

Keyword: Fashion, Entrepreneurship, Challenges, Opportunities, Digital

Introduction

Today, the fashion industry is dominated by major players like China and India, while cities such as London, New York, and Paris lead in design and fashion, influencing consumer preferences and the fashion system globally. In Nigeria, however, the collapse of major textile industries such as United Nigeria Textiles, Arewa Textiles, and African Textiles in cities like Kaduna, Kano, Lagos, and Enugu has led to significant unemployment. Traditional tailors and designers, mainly craftsmen, struggle to make a living. The textile and fashion sectors face challenges related to material scarcity and mass production skills. Entrepreneurship is seen as a key to developing Nigeria's fashion industry, but small and large fashion companies face service and product provision issues (Elisa, 2010). Innovation and the use of computer-aided design (CAD) software can create efficiencies and opportunities in the industry (Ojo, 2015). Despite research advocating for entrepreneurial solutions in fashion design to address unemployment, the problem persists.

This paper explores the challenges hindering entrepreneurial growth in the textile, garment, and allied industries and proposes potential solutions. Researchers indicate that 70% of fashion designers still work manually with scissors and cardboards, highlighting the need for operational efficiency to compete with contemporary industries. Some fashion design software companies have developed CAD solutions to streamline design processes (Shallini, 2007). Digital fashion and CAD software offer advantages in fabric cutting and production,

promoting high-performance digital cutting from machines like Zund (Gwari, 2008).

This paper examines the challenges faced by fashion design entrepreneurship and how computer software can efficiently develop innovative designs.

Entrepreneurship

The term, entrepreneurship has been widely discussed in management and economics literature by many authors. A universal conceptual framework or general definition does not exist. So, a way to capture the significant characteristics of an entrepreneur is provided by Wickham (2001). He defined entrepreneurship as “a management” and entrepreneurs as a “distinction and performer of managerial tasks as an agent of economic change and as a personality”. It means that entrepreneur should identifies a business idea to create a new venture, that requires knowledge in action and skill. Fashion designers should be an Entrepreneurs, as he contribute to the society in the different ways. For example, creations of jobs in fashion design, or textile industries and as a simulator of economic growth (Davidson, 2006).

Entrepreneurship in the fashion industry

Fashion is inspirational, creative, as well as, organized, strategy and management. The two elements that have come together ensures the success of a business idea (Saviolo and Testa, 2002). Just as any other industry, entrepreneurship in fashion industry combines the creation and management of a venture with the specific aspects

of fashion industry. Entrepreneur is an important contribution to the economic growth and the dynamic of the economy. It is very clear that, the apparel industry consists of many small industries who contributes to the industrial output. Fashion industry holds relevance in terms of economic power and dominate the business arena. In Germany, micro business in the design industry generates 75% of the total businesses as companies, which employ fewer than ten persons and whose annual turnover is under 2 million euro (<http://ec.europa.eu>). This is not happening in Nigeria and some other developing countries. More so, culture contributes to the society of the fashion industry for economic development. The economic performance needed to be enlarged by the cultural rate of return. This is also an economic revenue that should be created. Fashion as a part of people's social life and as an object of cultural value accounts for the well-being of people and serves at the same time the need to wear clothes. Therefore, fashion has been embedded in people's mind in their leisure and working time as a way of identification.

At this point, innovation is the main factor in the term of entrepreneurship and the most important for the fashion industry with complex economic, cultural and aesthetic dimensions. Based on this, fashion design entrepreneurs innovate insight. These dimensions have created constant changes. Therefore, what is constant in fashion is change (Dickson, 2003). There are needs for continuous innovation, it is necessary for fashion entrepreneurs to be continuously innovative in area of specialization. The fashion design entrepreneur is the key person that manages the entrepreneurial process and set up a business to integrate the design ideas to market place (Burke, 2008).

In fashion entrepreneurs, the creative sector has small-scale nature, Nigeria can borrow ideas from Germany as the total number of self-employed is ten percent and in the field of design consists of 50% self-employed. Nevertheless, in Nigeria a sizable number of fashion design companies are confronted with various challenges and obstacles, struggles in their little way to fashion business. (<http://www.kultur-kreative-wirtschaft.de>).

The challenges of the fashion entrepreneur are differentiated between specific industry challenges and the personnel challenges. The fashion entrepreneur as one of the personnel in the organization has to balance creativity with the managerial approach for the development of the organization.

Challenges of fashion Entrepreneurs in Nigeria

- 1. Lack of Start Capital:** Research reveals that getting finance for starting-ups is one of the major issues fashion entrepreneurs are facing. There may be different ideas on design processes of styles, photo-types, but money to execute the project may not be available.
- 2. Lack of Knowledge (Education):** Many people have not understood the concept of entrepreneurship, as it relates to fashion design, the equipment needed (Elisa, 2010) noticed that those entrepreneurs who have experienced entrepreneurship education, tend to do better and the survival of the organization are positive than those that lack formal education in entrepreneurship.
- 3. Poor Infrastructure:** Clearly mentioned, electricity is needed to run fashion business. Lack of electricity is one of the challenges of fashion entrepreneurship in Nigeria. Electrical equipment such as computer, electric sewing machine, digital fashion can be used for business. Usually, fashion business embarked on the use of petrol- and diesel-powered generator, as a result of power failure, thereby incurring more expenses.
- 4. Multiple Tax Imposition:** Another challenge fashion entrepreneurship faced is multiple – tax duties and levies. The Local, State and Federal Government depends on fashion business to collect tax respectively. However, individual or business has obligation to pay tax as part of their civil right, but it has become outrageous in Nigeria. However, Eliza (2010) stated that Nigeria companies income tax has approved only 39 taxes and levies, over 500 various levies and taxes are imposed to business by Local and State Governments respectively. These taxes have no legal backing, some are duplicated among those that have no legal backing. This makes it difficult for fashion entrepreneurs to easily run their business in Nigeria.
- 5. Lack of Access to Loan:** Due to lack of investors willing to give loan in starting or growing business such as fashion entrepreneurship, businesses of such idea will lack funds to start-up or continue the operation of the business. To access loan from Finance Institution has become very difficult in Nigeria. More so, Nigeria economy has not supported the start-up and growth of small-scale industry like fashion design". Similarly, finance Institutions are not ready to lend their money to new business idea.
- 6. The Challenge of Patience:** One of the characteristics of a successful individual is

patience. In Nigeria today, many people lack patience, and this includes most fashion entrepreneurs and business owners. They believed in start business and immediately expecting to generate lots of profit and money from the business. Lack of patience disallow the business to grow or develop. Generally, the aim of opening a business is to generate money, but to fashion entrepreneurs, they should understand that fashion business is not money oriented at the beginning. The money will be made not at the start, but as the business progressively developed, the money and profit will follow.

7. **Poor Marketing Strategy:** Many people start fashion entrepreneurship business without getting the required knowledge, based on how fashion industries operate. The individual rush into the business, it may take time to realize, he has not understood the business, or close it too soon as they start the fashion industry. This is one of the major challenges of fashion entrepreneurs in Nigeria. Most of the time, it may be too late, too close or end the business too soon as they start the fashion industry (business). Therefore, good knowledge of how-to market-fashion products is required, research is also needed to be carried out, strategy is to be put in place on how things should be done before fashion business is established. This allows the fashion designers greater advantage of breaking the markets growing early enough with little or no gain in the fashion business. Digital marketing on the internet has to be adequately understood. Lack of entrepreneurial business skills is a fortune problem for fashion designers in becoming an entrepreneur. While they are very confident about their creative work, they lack confidence entering the world of business, management, marketing, accounting, and financing have to be considered as weak points of fashion entrepreneurs. Whereas, the level of any business skills and ability to manage a business varies from one person to another.
8. **Inconsistency in Government Policies:** Fashion design is recognized as a sub-sector in the creative industry. The creative industry as a whole has drawn attention in politics due to the dynamical economic contribution. In Nigeria, government support for creative industries is very few as compare to other industries like technology and engineering sector. In the creative industry, music and drama takes the front stage, while fashion

industry is gradually coming up. Generally, Entrepreneurs need a flexible and conducive environment to run their business activities for long time. But the inconsistency in the Nigeria's government policies has made the environment for fashion business challenging from the start. As new government receives power, most of the previous government policies are amended or changed entirely. This also affects the running of the business structures. It seems to be more challenging tasks for fashion entrepreneurs to be capable to balance and manage creativity and business that are two different elements while Jones (2008) noticed that fashion consists of both commerce and creation. This element should be balanced for the development of the business.

9. **Communication –Networking:** Networking is defined as the ability to connect with a broad range of contacts with the aim of sharing useful information and resolves (Burke, 2008). It is very important for fashion entrepreneurs to have interaction and communication with people. This may be challenging to young fashion designers that his network is limited. It may take time for new entrepreneur to build up a network where he can get relevant contacts, useful information to be able to get access to relevant and broad work, that is very helpful in starting a business. At best, the network influences the set-up of a new venture in a beneficial way. As fashion entrepreneur, one has to sell himself. To sell oneself to a completely stranger, means that to show and increase one's integrity (Davidson, 2006). A fashion entrepreneur described his biggest problem the way to setup label. He said that, they had big problems in selling their fashion design fabrics- to describe the uniqueness of pieces. The buyers are looking for stories. As an entrepreneur, one has to really prove oneself at the beginning, but one has to get better acquainted everyday as one constantly learning the procedures. When communicating about business issues, there should always be two parties involved. Not the entrepreneur designers alone but involves another person to be discussed with.
10. **Fashion Designers as a Brand:** Consequently, at the same moment, the fashion entrepreneur stands behind and presented the label. This means that the fashion designer have to stand for the brand twenty-four-seven and as a result incorporates the brand. Elisa (2010) explained that it is not

one and the business, one is the business. The linkage of the founder and business implicates close emotional connection.

Most importantly, in the fashion industry, the publicity and awareness of the designers name and the associated design language is more present than other branches. Brands and designers' names became of particular importance in centuries ahead (Eliza, 2010). It is a great challenge to create not only interesting collection and good fashion products, but as well, to communicate the aesthetics of the products and to connect the personality successfully with the collection or product. The founder and fashion entrepreneurs of a small business is at the same time spoke person for label.

Small Scale Industry

The intention for setting up small-scale industry may be for different reasons, ranging from personal fulfillment, self – reliance, finance to designing or artistic freedom. But the main focus is the generation of value. For a creative entrepreneur, value can be related to a financial, social or emotional outcome. Eliza (2010) opines that some designers view to profit is relative, which cannot always be “translated into naira, dollars or cents’ as coming from the connection of design, art and commerce. Furthermore, he said that, conversations with different fashion entrepreneurs and industrial experts that fashion designers who set up company, the business should be profitable, but the expectation to earn money is not fortune, based on working hard. The small scale venture of the business is a challenge for an entrepreneur and the small company has not yet established on the market. The business owners is confronted with obstacles as dependence on a few customers and the missing effect of economy on scale production process.

Digital Cutting Machine:



Source: Zund Systemtechnik AG (2022)



Source: Zund Systemtechnik AG (2022)



Source: Zund Systemtechnik AG (2022)



Source: Zund Systemtechnik AG (2022)



Source: Zund Systemtechnik AG (2022)

Digital Fashion Design:



Source: Introduction to Digital Fashion Design skill- UCA (2022)



Source: Introduction to Digital Fashion Design skill- UCA (2022)



Source: Introduction to Digital Fashion Design skill- UCA (2022)

Some Potential Solution to the Challenges of Fashion Entrepreneurship in Nigeria

In spite of the challenges mentioned above, there are some potential solutions to reduce the challenges of entrepreneurs. This will allow for the growth and the development of small-scale industry. This includes the following as the strategy to boost the business:

- i. Education of fashion Entrepreneurs
Education is one of the solutions to the challenges of fashion entrepreneurs in Nigeria. One of the major actions of government is to make it a policy that fashion entrepreneurship courses such as fashion, weaving and other related courses should be introduced at the entrepreneurship lectures time. Some schools are beneficiary of such opportunity such as A.B.U. Zaria, Kogi State Polytechnic, Auchi Polytechnic, Yaba College of Tech and Kaduna Polytechnic in fashion for self – employment, establishment of small scale industry. All the process and methods of establishing fashion industry will be clearly explained to the students.
- ii. Government Efforts: Efforts from the government will reduce the challenges if government can provide good trade policies and back it up with the constitution in order not to easily change it.
- iii. Creativity: Creating new ideas and business plans is another solution to the challenges of fashion entrepreneurs in Nigeria. Since the state of fashion

entrepreneurship has been depreciating in Nigeria with old ideas and approaches to the market. Creative and skillful ideas break new grounds and pave way for development of fashion entrepreneurship in Nigeria.

- iv. Research Opportunities: For new fashion entrepreneurs to have good knowledge base of market, they are about to enter, he need to make good research about it. There are books and other materials on the internet that talk about the problem and challenges of fashion entrepreneurship and how to solve these challenges. Business personnel should always make research on the fashion products they are selling. This will help them know what's trending and they will not be left out/behind. Research introduces an entrepreneurs to a lot of ideas and solution on how to solve the problem he is having.
- v. Getting Assistance from Financial Institution: Financial Institution can also make the whole process of entrepreneurship easier through the provisions of financial securities like loans should be easy for fashion entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurship is difficult in Nigeria, but not impossible. If one can navigate these challenges as smoothly as possible, one story will be different from jobless one that roams about.

Conclusion

Textile Industries in Nigeria had been closed-down. Fashion entrepreneurship that requires small scale industry are facing challenges as mentioned in this paper. Thus, the introduction of 3D fashion digital design will allow entrepreneurs, students and textile industries to have the prospect opportunities in skill acquisition of digital fashion students and entrepreneurs. With good knowledge and proper training in fashion digital of the aforementioned with various techniques will lead to self-reliance and foster story entrepreneurial scheme. Education in computer and industrial design seem as vehicle entrepreneur training and self-reliance, as expected at the end of the program. Digital fashion develops entrepreneurs new styles and trend, in individual personally, society as they moves through current styles in the world. Fashion entrepreneurs should understand that human needs, problems and challenges in fashion as potential opportunity to have skills, knowledge acquisition in 3D digital fashion for self-employment and to be employer of labour.

Recommendation

The following recommendations were made in this paper:

- **Encourage Workshops and Seminars:** Promote workshops and seminars focused on entrepreneurship development.
- **Embrace Digital Fashion Trends:** Encourage fashion entrepreneurs to improve skills in 3D digital fashion, as traditional methods like manual tie-dye and batik are attracting fewer customers. Digital fashion supports prototyping and mass production.
- **Cultivate Entrepreneurial Culture:** Fashion design lecturers should instill an entrepreneurial mindset in students and expose them to 3D digital fashion.
- **Support from Government and Financial Institutions:** Government and financial institutions, including banks and cooperative societies, should support entrepreneurial individuals and organizations.
- **Financial and Creative Support:** Fashion designers should not only present creative ideas but also seek financial backing from banks or other financial institutions.
- **Comprehensive Education:** Fashion entrepreneur education should include not only knowledge and skills but also attitudes and guidelines in 3D fashion before starting a business.

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