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Investigation Into Constraints of Appropriate Clothing During Climate Change Among Rural Dwellers in Nigeria

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Abstract

This paper investigated constraints of appropriate clothing usage during climate change among rural dwellers in Nigeria. Appropriate clothing entails a state in which clothing is sustainable; capable of protecting both the environment and consumers. In most cultures, clothing was introduced as a method of protecting the human body against extreme weather conditions like strong winds, intense heat, cold and precipitation or fulfil some cultural rites. The way clothing consumers use, care and dispose used clothing are of paramount importance to people and the environment. The review showed that there are both internal and external constraints of appropriate Clothing usage to suit Climate Change. Age and education of individuals, lack of concern for the environment among consumers; limited knowledge about clothing consumptions impact on the environment. Social and cultural norms, the price of appropriate clothing and lack of infrastructure, lack of business wear and footwear, sizes and fit; lack of finances to buy more expensive sustainable clothing are some of the external constraints. This paper concludes that designed clothing should be affordable, fit individuals and suit climate. It was recommended that engaging effective clothing consumers to positively change their mindsets on clothing purchasing, care and disposal will improve appropriate clothing among rural dwellers.

Key words: Climate change, Clothing usage, disposal behaviour, appropriate clothing, sustainable clothing

Introduction

Climate change also called global warming, refers to the rise in average surface temperatures on the Earth (United Nation Framework Convention on Climate Change; UNFCCC, 2005). It is any change in climate over time whether due to natural variability or as a result of human activity (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change; IPCC, 2007). The most general concept of climate change, therefore, is a change in the statistical properties of the climate system when considered over a long period of time. The term is sometimes used to refer specifically to climate change caused by human activity, as opposed to changes in climate that may have resulted as part of the earth's natural processes. In this respect, especially in the context of environmental policy, the term climate change has become synonymous with anthropogenic global warming, however, global warming refers to surface temperature increases while climate change includes global warming and everything else that increase greenhouse gas levels. Human-induced climate change and its impact will continue for many decades and in some cases for many centuries; individually and collectively, and in combination with the effects of other human activities, including clothing. In this era of climate change, appropriate clothing must be adopted to enhance safety of both consumers and the environment.

Clothing is the general term for the various coverings designed to protect and adorn the human body, it may be woven, knitted, felted or sewn and made from natural or man-made fibers. Agbo (2017) points out that the term clothing encompasses coverings constructed from

textile fabrics. These include dresses, garments, apparels, drabs, jewelleries, foot wears, as well as all forms of body ornaments and portable articles which are worn or carried by a person to connote fashion.

Clothing is generally classified into women's (female) and men's (male) wears. Apart from this gender-based classification, there are different types of clothing and the choices have only grown more varied throughout history. There are clothing choices for every occasion and style preference, as well as choices tied strongly to culture. Clothing styles are as varied as there are people and purposes and include but not limited to professional clothing comprising of workplace apparel, business suits and casual business dress; clothing for formal occasions comprising of formal wear, from glamorous women's cocktail dresses and ball gowns to men's tuxedos; trendy styles of clothing comprising of fashion trends, ranging from street style to punk looks, as well as other popular teenage fashions. Others include clothing for travel such as Hawaiian shirts for beach wear and skiing; undergarments comprising of the various types of lingerie and under wears; exercise wear (Hidayati, Chen and Hua, 2012, Agbo, 2017). Furthermore, clothing for workout wear: Leotards and sweatshirts, sport shoes and sneakers; sports apparel designed for specific sporting activities, such as bicycle clothing and golf wear; safety apparel comprising of protective clothing for situations ranging from workplace safety to sports safety (Hidayati, Chen and Hua 2012) .

Appropriate clothing entails a state in which clothing is sustainable and capable of protecting both the environment and consumers (Goworek, Fisher, Woodward and Hiller, 2012). Sustainable clothing is jeopardized by the manner in which consumers care for and dispose clothing. The practices associated with clothing care and disposal have created negative and unsustainable environmental impact. Even the consumers committed to appropriate clothing lack awareness of the sustainability issues in clothing care; based on the belief that appropriate clothing is limited to purchasing only (Fletcher, 2008).

Appropriate disposal of used clothing is of great concern and importance to the clothing user and the environment. Used unwanted clothing in the home according to Steinbring & Rucher (2003) are post-consumer textile waste. Steinbring & Rucher (2003) reiterated that these consist of garments or household textiles that original owners decide to discard. In California alone, these textile wastes amount to 8.75 billion pounds annually or 35 pounds per person. In Nigeria, Ajila (2019) documented that waste, including solid textile waste disposal systems practiced by residents were open land surface dumping and open- air burning. Kilbon, (1999) averred that the major outlets of clothing disposal or discarding undesirable clothing is donation to charity. Redistributing the items in the form of second - hand clothing via charity shops or textile merchants and reusing fabrics for ''eco-fashion'' is a major avenue for disposing clothing in the developed world.

According to Sull & Turconi, (2008), another relevant aspect of clothing usage is fast fashion. This entails the feeding of trend data into production to enable rapid and frequent turnover of affordable fashion; with refreshed styles and shelf-life reduced in some cases to only a few weeks, this is fuelled by changes in technology. Fast fashion has also cancelled the rivalry between quality and quantity; with quantity becoming the major concern. According to Morgan & Birtwistle (2009), young people prefer making multiple cheaper purchases to buying a single more expensive item. Shopping for clothes is on the increase and seen as a pleasurable activity. This makes people have more required clothes and warrant indiscrimate use of clothes regardless of weather changes. Clothing consumption has been fuelled by rising affluence and lower prices of most clothes (Morley, Slata, Russell Tipper and Ward, 2006).

According to Iwanow, McEachern & Jeffrey (2005), clothing purchases are influenced by price, quality, and style;

however, price is in most cases considered to be the most influential factor. Among consumers in developed nations such as America and Europe, intentions to purchase environmentally friendly apparel are strongly influenced by social pressure and concern for the environment and moderately influenced by guilt and knowledge about environmentally friendly apparel, (Cowan and Kinley, 2014). Due to the campaign for use of environment friendly clothing items, environmentalists subscribe to purchasing clothing to appease their conscience or guilt feeling. Even the environmentally aware consumers procure clothing based on economic and personal considerations, while habits and routines are the major determinants of disposal behaviour (Goworek *et al.,* 2012). There are a few categories of clothing consumers orchestrated by different motivations, namely: social-oriented, sacrifice-oriented and self-oriented consumers. This will form the discussion on this paper, including identifying the constraints to appropriate clothing during climate change and proffering the solutions to these constraints to appropriate clothing during climate change.

Social-oriented consumers

Social- oriented consumers are concerned about the well-being of the society. Social-oriented clothing consumers are likely, due to their concern for the environment and society to indulge in appropriate clothing agitation. Individuals with preference for keeping moral obligations dislike learning things that voluntarily contribute to social values (Nyborg, 2008). Nyborg (2008) argues that such information can trigger unpleasant feelings of cognitive dissonance. Cognitive dissonance occurs when a person holds contrary views , ideas, values about what goes on. The discrepancy between what people believe and how they behave motivates people to engage in action that help to minimise feeling of discomfort, (Cherry, 2020). Dirsehan & Celik (2011) averred that strategic marketing management is based on segmentation, targeting and positioning. Social experiences besides other experiences are very relevant in purchase and consumption of goods (Dirsehan and Celik 2011), including clothing.

Sacrifice-oriented consumer

The study of sacrifice is justified by the very popularization of the term among the individuals of contemporary society, (Gomes, Farais, Silva, Melo and Nascimento 2018). Sacrifice in purchase or usage of clothing entails making some kind of effort to achieve something. The clothing consumer makes effort at wearing appropriate clothes to satisfy climate conditions. The sacrifice in (not) acquiring and (not) using a given product is part of the current vocabulary, permeated by financial and identity crises (Gomes et al 2018). The way the person behaves towards the purchase and usage of clothing item impacts the level of sacrifice. The intention of purchasing the clothing item is affected by monetary sacrifice perceived by the clothing user

Self-oriented consumers

A self-oriented clothing consumer is primarily concerned especially with his own desires, needs, or interests. Some persons display self- worth in what they wear, constructing one's self with external symbols, such as appearance, clothing, and fashion items. Clothing selection and consumption of self-oriented consumer is not dictated by current campaign or research findings. Research has shown that personal considerations such as economic benefit outweighs environmental considerations for self -oriented clothing consumers. For instance, by sharing clothes, consumers in China (Khan and Thiele, 2019), aim at saving cost and having some financial gains. Thus, irrespective of all other challenges, a self -oriented clothing consumer would feel satisfied sharing clothes rather than purchase new ones even if there is need to fulfil climate changes.

Cultural norms and values are intimately related to ones' sense of identity (Ntalu, 2021), this may also have tremendous influence

on self-oriented clothing consumers. Among rural dwellers and in most traditional communities in Nigeria, the "*Opa*" woven fabrics are used for social, religious, ritual, medicinal and domestic functions (Maiwada , Dutsenwai and Waziri, 2012). Some individuals have very strong attachment to use of traditionally woven fabrics, (Ntalu, 2021).

One category of people that deserve attention with regards to appropriate clothing are the rural dwellers. In Nigeria, rural dwellers are associated with agriculture, (Otekhile and Verte 2017). Otekhile & Verte (2017) reiterated that in advanced economies such as North America and Europe, rural development and farmers' wellbeing have been given a holistic and proactive attention, however, the reverse has been the case in African countries such as Nigeria. Hence, rural dwellers are usually excluded from modern fashion trends and ethics and may not be particularly concerned with clothes appropriate to climate change; clothing selection is factored by cultural and work demands.

In most cultures, clothing was introduced as a method of protecting the human body against extreme weather conditions such as strong winds, intense heat, cold and precipitation; as well as fulfil some cultural rites. Most cultural clothes in Nigeria are woven locally using traditional loom; most of the weaves are tight so the fabrics are thick but very artistic and beautiful, (Ntalu, 2021). Tight closely woven fabrics prevent the circulation of air around the skin, preventing the exit of the air reheated by the skin makes people feel uncomfortable in hot weather. People wear clothing for functional as well as social reasons. Apart from the practical functions of placing a piece of garment above the skin, wearing clothes also carries specific cultural and social meanings. Among the rural dwellers, use of cultural clothing is very predominant (Maiwada , Dutsenwai & Waziri, 2012), for instance, it is bad sight for people to show parts of the human anatomy and particularly the genitals. Religion, customs and particular historical circumstances have shaped the way different people in various times feel about clothing. Clothing has been regarded as one of the best ways to distinguish social classes, sexes, occupation, marital status and ethnic or religious affiliation.

Recent technological developments give room for great speculation for the direction clothes will take. A person can purchase clothes made from natural sources such as silk, wool and leather, but may also select one from man-made fibres extensively used in clothes manufacturing, like nylon, polyester, Lycra and Gore-Tex.

Constraints to Appropriate Clothing in the era of Climate Change among Rural Dwellers.

Internal Constraints against Appropriate Clothing in Climate Change

Internal constraints to use of appropriate clothing in climate change are those relating to consumers themselves, lack of concern for the environment among consumers (Hustvedt and Dickson, 2009), limited knowledge about clothing consumption's impact on the environment (Kim and Damhorst, 1998), poor disposal of clothing waste causing blockage of water ways leading to environmental hazards. Clothing items that are not biodegradable impart the environment negatively and demographic characteristics such as age and education are important considerations in climate change (Hustvedt and Dickson, 2009). Some people are more affected by climate change than others because of factors like age, health, income, occupation, location and daily life activities (Hustvedt and Dickson, 2009; United States Environmental Protection Agency EPA, 2016). According to reports by US EPA (2016), older adults are vulnerable to climate change- related health impacts.

Climate change such as extreme weather conditions detect what people wear, for example, extreme weather conditions bring about adverse health conditions especially for the older adults. Such health situations include arthritis, muscle and bone loss leading to limited

mobility. Besides, lack of knowledge and/or misconception about the environmental effects of production and different fibres; and negative perception of sustainable clothing add to barriers in selecting clothing that fit drastic changes in weather (Hiller, 2010).

External Constraints

External constraints are those independent of consumers such as: Social norms, cultural norms, price of appropriate clothing, lack of infrastructure (Hustvedt and Dickson, 2009; Hiller,2010), limited availability of sustainable clothing outlets, restricted clothing styles. Other external barriers to appropriate clothing are limited availability of sustainable clothing outlets, restricted styles such as lack of business wear and footwear, sizes and fit, lack of financial resources to buy more expensive sustainable clothing, poor presentation of clothing in second-hand shops and social expectations regarding conventions of dress for different professions (Hiller, 2010). McNeill & Moore (2015) reported similar findings with self-oriented consumers being preoccupied with price and time, limited availability of items, social-oriented consumers deterred by lack of awareness, a perceived lack of social acceptability and high price; and sacrifice-oriented consumers being sceptical of industry motives. Joung & Park-Poaps (2013) documented that appropriate clothing has to compete against other powerful motivations, which influence disposal behaviour. Such powerful motivations include: Concern for saving money which motivates the resale or reuse of clothing and convenience which motivates discarding of clothing.

Breaking the Constraints to Appropriate Clothing in the era of Climate Change among Rural Dwellers

The approaches required to break the barriers to appropriate clothing among rural households are presented as follows:

Motivating consumer concern for the environment

Putting the environmental perspective at the forefront of fashion consumption by encouraging sustainable clothing (use of eco- friendly resources such as fibre crops or recycled materials) items should be an urgent concern for every society. "The earth Logic fashion research action plan argues for putting the health and consequently the future security and health of all species including humans before industry , business and economic growth"(en.wikipedia.org).

Engaging effectively with clothing consumers about knowledge they are buying

Improving transparency of the supply chain and earning clothing consumers' trust are ways of engaging effectively with consumers to address the barrier of complexity in sustainability and appropriate clothing supply, (Clark, 2008). A brand-focused mindset might encourage consumers to value clothing that embraces sustainability within its branding values. According to Iwanow et al. (2005), clothing purchases are determined primarily by price, quality and style. Increasing the quality and style may compensate for higher price. Information on individual clothing needs for age, health, income, occupation, location and daily life activities would guide clothing users on making clothing choices.

Changing consumers' mindsets on Clothing purchase, Care and disposal

Improving sustainable behaviour involves changing consumers' mindsets away from following fashion and buying new clothes, to investing in clothes that will be suitable for climate change.

According to Cho, Gupta & Kim (2015), there is an association between focus on style, appropriate clothing purchase and disposal behaviour. Consumers could also be provided with tools and assistance to help them understand their preferred style and cuts that would suit the body shapes, so that they feel confident in their clothes and value them as a result. This might persuade consumers to invest in better quality clothes and to wear, care and keep them longer and balance out the perceived

financial, social and psychological risks of clothing purchase. Labelling may offer a supplementary, rather than leading communication mechanism for appropriate information.

An intervention to change consumers' clothing disposal habits is recycling to prolong the life of clothes. With the right incentives from government and markets for the recycled products, textile recycling could also become part of normal recycling behaviour.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Appropriate clothing is required to forestall the effect of climate change especially on rural dwellers. Using appropriate clothing by supporting designers to indulge in clothing designs that fit individuals and suit climate will reduce barriers to appropriate clothing usage. Based on this conclusion, the following recommendations are made:

1. Clothing specialists and Home Economics Extension workers should create awareness to enhance knowledge on appropriate clothing, clothing disposal and influence on the environment.
2. Clothing designers should design eco-friendly clothes with materials that are affordable to all categories of persons in cognizance with the requirements for climatic changes.

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