

Reviving Sustainable Consumption in Clothing: A Bridal Gown Innovative Approach

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ABSTRACT

The aim of the study was to revive sustainable consumption in clothing using the bridal gown innovative approach. Specifically, the study identifies various activities performed by brides on their wedding day, designed and constructed an innovative and sustainable bridal gown for brides. The study adopted survey and Research and Development (R & D) research design. The area of the study was Rivers State in Nigeria. The population for the study comprised of 134 registered brides and 266 registered tailors. The study was in three phases. The sample size for phase I of the study was 242 respondents (80 registered brides-to-be and 162 tailors). Simple random sampling technique was used to select 80 brides and 162 fashion designers used for need assessment in phase one of the study. The instrument for data collection for phase I of the study was Bridal gown assessment instrument for Brides and fashion designers (BGAIBFD). The reliability of the instrument was determined using Cronbach Alpha coefficient which yielded 0.97. The data collected were analyzed using mean, and standard deviation. Major findings included 9 activities performed by brides on their wedding day. Among recommendations made were that innovative and sustainable bridal gown should be given wide publicity by wedding industries with appropriate information on its sustainability potentials.

Keywords: Clothing, Bridal gown, sustainable consumption, innovative approach.

INTRODUCTION

Bridal gown is a gown that consists of one or two upper and lower parts that are joined (sewn) into one. The silhouette of a variety of bridal gown can be loose or body shaped and the length of the bridal gown also varies (Suhartini *et al.*, 2020). Bridal gown has been a garment with high sentimental value that are part of the bride personal history or reflect and shape the brides' identity. Throughout history, women have tried to make their bridal gown special to suit the wedding occasion and to make the bride beautiful and splendid to look at (Hudson, 2010). Bridal gown has been on the increase due to the increase in the number of weddings. Weddings have become increasingly essential to the society and it is noted to be one of the most extravagant

and expensive ceremonies held today as the U.S. wedding industry makes more than 50 billion dollars annually, and costs are between \$26,000 and \$35,000 per wedding (Random History, 2007).

In Nigeria, the story is not different as the wedding industry in Nigeria is currently expanding and vibrant, although concrete figures appear to be lacking. A Bloomberg article estimates that \$17 million was spent on weddings in Lagos, Nigeria, over a five-month period (Bloomberg, 2014). Nigerian wedding planner, expresses that some couples spend over \$2 million on a single wedding and that the average Nigerian wedding costs between £7,000 and £10,000 for 300 to 500 guests, although guest lists can easily run into thousands (Torera, 2017). This shows that wedding and the making of bridal gown is big business in Nigeria but the way bridal gowns are underutilized has been a challenge because it is unsustainable. Bridal gown designs are demanding, innovative and modern. The alternative for bride gown waste is to design and produce wedding gowns that will be sustainable. Therefore, it will be ideal to design a wedding gown that will be couture, fashionable and desirable. A gown that one could use more than once after the wedding. In Rivers State, brides spend so much money on designers wedding gowns that will not be used again after the wedding day. Some brides higher wedding gown with huge amount of money while some spend so much to customized their wedding gown. Whatever the case, large amount of energy, time and money is spent on beautiful wedding gowns that will become a waste because it will never be used after the wedding day. These practices result to waste of money and other resources and are not sustainable.

Sustainability is a general term that often refers to actions and products meeting current needs without sacrificing the ability of future needs being met. According to United Nations (1987) in Ezema (2017) sustainability is defined as development that meets the needs of the present without compromising those of the future. Bridal wear products remain important in today's consumer culture, but the sustainability of that consumption is lacking, as it often leads to excess

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waste. Sustainability is in three spheres which are social, economic and environmental. Environmental sustainability has been the interest of researchers for over a decade. However, the nature of bridal gown is contradictory to this movement as bridal gowns in terms of price and use are the most wasteful garments in the fashion industry. The creation of bridal products uses resources, increases the impact on the environment, and generates waste (Fletcher, 2013). In an attempt to promote sustainability in clothing industry, the industry has focused on using eco-materials and more resource efficient production. However, the scale of production and consumption has increased to levels where the benefits of technical improvements are reduced (McGrath, 2020). Creating true sustainability in bridal industry requires reducing the material flow of clothing, addressing both sustainable production and consumption. Therefore, bridal wear producers must change their operations from exchange value to use value, which offers the opportunity to increase garment quality and reduce quantity demanded through encouraging consumers to engage in fashion through wearing, not purchasing clothes. This is because the success of this approach depends on designing clothes able to satisfy both the functional, aesthetic and emotional values of consumers as well as breaking the passive acquisition of bridal gown and creating bridal gown that is meaningful to the bride over a longer period of time. According to European clothing Action plan (2018) the 'best dress' served as a functional, multipurpose garment that could be worn to a variety of special occasions and be altered in line with the changing needs of its wearer. This versatile approach continued well into the twentieth century. Fashion magazines of the 1930s advised brides on styles of dresses that could later be adapted for other uses. Women altered, dyed, and changed decorative elements of the dress so that they could wear it for other occasion. Designers of bridal wear should seek for ways of designing and manufacturing that is based on meeting brides needs with less material intensity. Sustainability strategies based on consumer needs provide an opportunity to design for social innovation.

Innovation is a deliberate intervention designed to initiate and establish future development concerning technology, economics and social practices. Innovation is essential in business as it aids in moving towards more sustainable fashion future. Smart top performing companies are using sustainability as a frontier driver for innovation (Kozlowski et al., 2016) and as a source for opportunity and long-term competitive advantage (Gobble, 2012). Innovation will therefore play a key role in delivering solutions that are both sustainable and competitive in designs of bridal gowns (Gobble, 2012). Consumption of bridal wear has been recreational rather

than need based. More brides attempt to meet their internal needs externally with available bridal gown. The more dissatisfied the bride becomes leaving society with a variety of social woes. Thus, the need for the innovative design thinking approach for bridal gown.

Design is the creativity aspect of fashion, with aesthetics, design drives the fashion world and determine how it can eventually be delivered to the consumer. Design phase and product development processes are key phases that present many opportunities for designers to introduce and integrate the dimension of sustainability (Armstrong and LeHew, 2011). A sustainable bridal gown design will seek to incorporate environmental principles such as low energy and water consumption, minimize impact on climate change, limit resource consumption, minimize impact on the local ecosystem, give preference to non-toxic materials, reduce or eliminate waste and emphasize quality and durability over price. By shifting the focus to the design process, bridal gown products can be designed to influence consumer behavior, reduce impact from waste to use, needs of brides and induce sustainable consumption. Hence the study on reviving sustainable consumption in clothing: a bridal gown innovative approach.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study is to revive sustainable consumption in clothing through a bridal gown innovative approach. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Identify the activities performed by brides that determine their clothing needs
2. Produce 2 styles of wedding gowns and their innovative approach (adapted) that could be used after the wedding for other occasion

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What are the activities performed by brides that determine their clothing needs?
2. What are the two styles of wedding gown and their innovative approach that could be used (adapted) after the wedding for other occasion?

Methodology:

Design of the Study: The design of the study is a mixed design that utilized survey, Research and Development.

Area of the Study: This study was carried out in Rivers State which is one of the States in South-South geopolitical zones of Nigeria. In most part of the State, a lot of brides-to-be existed as wedding ceremonies are being celebrated on weekly basis. This has increased the need for bridal gown that are not sustainable in the area. Most of the bridal gowns that are utilized by brides in this area are not reusable (underutilized) after the

wedding day. Also, in terms of cost, use and storage, bridal gowns used by brides in this area is a big waste as most brides in the area never use their bridal gown again after the wedding ceremony. Rivers State is bounded on the North by Imo, Abia and Anambra States, on the East by Akwa- Ibom State, on the West by Bayelsa and Delta States and on the South by Atlantic Ocean. Rivers State has three senatorial districts with 23 Local Government Areas (LGA).

Population for the Study: The population for the study comprised 400 respondents made up of three groups; 109 registered brides (Marriage registry 2020/ 2021 update); 266 registered fashion designers (Rivers State Ministry of Commerce, 2020/2021 update), 25 Home Economics lecturers in the two tertiary institutions offering Home Economics Education in Rivers State.

Sample and Sampling Technique: The sample size for phase I was 242 comprising of 80 registered brides-to-be and 162 fashion designers from the 23 Local Government Areas in Rivers State. In selecting this sample size, multi-stage sampling technique was utilized. In the first stage, the 23 Local government Areas in Rivers State was zoned into three senatorial zones. In the second stage, two LGAs were randomly selected from each senatorial zone, given a manageable size of six selected LGAs. In the third stage, 27 fashion designers were purposively selected from the six LGA's given a total of 162 fashion designers. Also, 13 brides to be were purposively selected from five LGA's and 15 from one LGA given a total of 80 brides-to-be. selected from the six LGA's. The 80 registered brides-to-be and 162 fashion designers (242 respondents) were used for bridal gown needs assessment in phase one of the study. Convenience sampling technique was also used to select 9 user's models who consented to participate in fit-testing of the constructed prototype bridal gown used in phase III of the study from the 80 brides-to-be. 2 user's models were used because 2 bridal gown style designs were developed.

Instrument for Data Collection: The instrument used for data collection for phase I of the study was a structured questionnaire developed from literature reviewed and based on the objectives of the study. The questionnaire was titled 'Bridal gown needs assessment instrument for fashion designers and brides-to-be (BGNAIFDB).' This instrument was used to gather information concerning the various activities performed by brides. Section A of the instrument contained demographic information of the respondents. Section B had four-point scales measuring 9 activities performed by brides. The response options were based on a 4 – point Gothman rating scale comprising; Strongly Agreed (4), Agree (3), Disagree (2) and Strongly Disagree (1).

Method of Data Collection: The fashion designers were visited during their monthly association meetings while the brides-to-be were reached at the registry. At such visits, 242 copies of (BGNAIFDB) were distributed with the help of five research assistants who aid in interpreting the contents of the questionnaire to respondents. All the 242 copies were also retrieved showing 100% return rate.

Method of Data Analysis: Data obtained for the study were analyzed using mean and standard deviation. Mean of 2.50 was used as cut-off point for decision making for the four-point scale of each (BGNAIFDB) items. Any item with mean rating of 2.50 and above was considered as agree while mean value below 2.50 was considered disagreed. All data collected were analyzed using statistical package of social sciences (SPSS) version 25.0.

RESULTS

The data presented in Table 1 revealed that the mean responses of respondents on various activities performed by brides that determine their clothing needs. The table shows that the mean responses on the 9 items range from 2.51 to 3.98 for brides and 2.53 to 3.96 for fashion designers and were above the cut-off point of 2.50 ($\bar{X} > 2.50$). This indicated that brides performed all the 9 activities that determine their clothing needs. The activities include dancing, sitting, walking, bending, arm stretching, clapping among others. The Standard deviation which ranges from 0.45 to 0.99 for brides and 0.46 to 0.99 for fashion designers revealed the strength of the respondent's agreement on various activities performed by brides that determine their clothing needs.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This study focuses on reviving sustainable consumption in clothing a bridal gown innovation approach. The study with respect to research question one found evidence that 9 major activities are performed by brides that determine their clothing needs. These activities include dancing, walking, bending, standing, squatting, arm stretching, bending, clapping and singing. This finding on bride involvement in various activities on their wedding day conforms with the findings of Forrest (2021) who found that an order of dance is followed at a wedding reception and that dancing involves arm stretching, bending among other activities. The findings of the study also corroborated with that of Gary (2020) who established that brides are constantly involved in a range of activities during wedding games and that most games played at wedding and wedding reception involves sitting, dancing, standing, singing, clapping and arm stretching. In line with the finding of this study, Gray (2020) added that music is played at wedding with dancing and procession song for walking down the

aisle. The study in respect to research question two, produced two styles of wedding gowns that could be worn on the wedding day and reuse for other occasion

after the wedding day. This gives room for innovation and sustainability approach in bridal gowns.

Table 1. Mean Responses of Brides and Fashion Designers on activities performed by brides that determine their clothing needs

S/N	Items	Response Categories					
		Brides = 80			Fashion Designers =162		
		Mean	SD	Rank	Mean	SD	Rank
1	Dancing	3.98	0.99	1	3.96	0.99	1
2	Walking	2.71	0.68	4	2.75	0.69	4
3	Bending	2.57	0.61	6	2.57	0.62	6
4	Standing	3.28	0.82	2	3.36	0.84	2
5	Sitting	3.06	0.77	3	3.13	0.78	3
6	Squatting	2.54	0.49	8	2.56	0.49	8
7	Arm stretching	2.58	0.64	5	2.58	0.64	5
8	Clapping	2.55	0.52	7	2.57	0.52	7
9	Singing	2.51	0.45	9	2.53	0.46	9
Grand Mean		2.86	0.66		2.89	0.67	

Key: SD = standard deviation



Fig 1. Bridal gown for wedding



Fig 2. Innovative bridal gown for use after wedding



Fig 3. Bridal gown for wedding



Fig 4. Innovative bridal gown for use after wedding

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings, the study concludes that innovative bridal gown that will serve other purposes and value and are reusable, fashionable and sustainable is paramount at this time. Moreover, it is vital for change to take place in order to manage the devastating amount of waste created by redesigning a collection of wedding gowns, not only will innovation and sustainability be promoted, but it will prevent another wedding gown from being wasted or ending up in a storage box or landfill. The study demonstrates the possibility of redesigning bridal gown to reduce waste and for use value.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made:

1. Innovative bridal gown should be given wide publicity by wedding industries with appropriate information on its sustainability potentials.
2. Innovative bridal gown should be made available in the market for brides -to-be.
3. Garment manufacturers should be encouraged to design and produce innovative bridal gown that has use value (i.e reused) after wedding.

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الملخص العربي

إحياء الاستهلاك المستدام في الملابس: مدخل لفستان زفاف مبتكر

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من الدراسة. أداة جمع البيانات للمرحلة الأولى من الدراسة هي أداة تقييم فستان الزفاف للعرائس ومصممي الأزياء (BGAIBFD). تم تحديد موثوقية الأداة باستخدام معامل Cronbach Alpha الذي أسفر عن ٠.٠٩٧. تم تحليل البيانات التي تم جمعها باستخدام المتوسط والانحراف المعياري. تضمنت النتائج الرئيسية ٩ أنشطة تؤديها العرائس في يوم زفافهن. توصى الدراسة بأن ثوب الزفاف المبتكر والمستدام يجب أن يحصل على دعابة واسعة من قبل صناعة فساتين الزفاف مع توفير المعلومات المناسبة عن إمكانات الاستدامة. الكلمات المفتاحية: الملابس، ثوب الزفاف، الاستهلاك المستدام، النهج المبتكر.

تهدف الدراسة الى إحياء الاستهلاك المستدام للملابس باستخدام نهج مبتكر لفساتين الزفاف. تقوم الدراسة على تحديد الأنشطة المختلفة التي تقوم بها العرائس في يوم زفافهن، والتي تم تصميم وانتاج فستان زفاف مبتكرًا ومستدامًا للعرائس. اعتمدت الدراسة على طريقة البحث والتطوير (R & D) في تصميم البحث. منطقة الدراسة هي ولاية ريفرز Rivers State في نيجيريا. تألف مجتمع الدراسة من ١٣٤ عروساً مسجلاً و٢٦٦ خياطاً مسجلاً. تمت الدراسة على ثلاث مراحل. في المرحلة الأولى بلغ حجم عينة الدراسة ٢٤٢ مستجيباً (٨٠ عرائس مسجلين و١٦٢ خياطاً). تم استخدام تقنية أخذ العينات العشوائية البسيطة لاختيار ٨٠ عرائس و١٦٢ مصمم أزياء لتقييم الحاجة في المرحلة الأولى