

Indigenous Crafts and Costume Design: An Exploration of Raffia Products of Ikot Ekpene, Akwa Ibom State

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Abstract

Costume design is one of the most essential components in any artistic performances, but it is sad to observe that many costume design products used in Nigeria rely on are foreign products for end products that can be achieved with indigenous crafts from locally sourced raw materials. The importance of locally sourced products in the indigenous crafts is at the very foundation of the reason why the dependence of foreign costume design for artistic performances should be discouraged in order to pave way for the utilization of local crafts in designing costumes for theatrical performances. This paper is positioned to establish and emphasize the uniqueness of local raw materials that can be tapped and processed through indigenous craft processes for use as alternative to exotic costume design with focus on Raffia products of Ikot Ekpene in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. However, this paper has situated a distinction of traditional crafts-production methods that will allow for the identification of handmade or traditional/indigenous craft-products that are capable of replacing the foreign products in the area of costume design. The paper debunked the perception that indigenous crafts are for mere decoration and figments of fantasy and established their utilization, as costumes designed for artistic performances. Finally, the study recommends for indigenous crafts with local raw materials, especially the Raffia products of Ikot Ekpene in Akwa Ibom State, in order to facilitate costume design products for artistic performances.

Keywords: Indigenous Crafts, Raffia Products of Ikot Ekpene, Akwa Ibom State, Nigerian Cultural Policy, artistic

Introduction

Craft from a general perspective has to do with manually produced objects meant to serve a particular purpose or human needs. Ekeke et al describe craft as activities which requires manual dexterity as well as experience and artistic skills in the use of hands to make out visible objects, and within the context of this paper, props and items required in theatrical productions (2026). Nkan, Akaenyi and Bassey add that craft, which could be considered a method of thinking and creating things, has significantly bridged the gap between industrial design, and art (2025). In the aspect of Crafts, the Nigerian Cultural Policy states that:

The state shall recognize the fact that crafts are available materials heritage which form a tangible part of historical and contemporary culture. The state shall recognize the economic and cultural roles of

crafts in national development and shall provide adequate resources for their identification, preservation, promotion and development (1998: p12).

Based on the functions of craft enshrined in Nigerian Cultural Policy, with relevance to cultural policy, it is clear that cultural policy remains a process that provides for the preservation and promotion of arts and crafts of a people for growth and development. Indigenous crafts, as observed presently in Nigeria, and to a large extent, have been relegated to the background as a result of high demands for foreign crafts that have flooded the Nigerian space. Whereas there are still so much potential in local crafts produced in Nigeria with locally sourced raw materials to satisfy the different needs, mostly in costume design for performances with prospects of being explored for further and wider utilization. Additionally, Bassey and Essien

argue that the promotion of indigenous knowledge supports unified cultural and political identity (2026). And craft, as a cultural product shares symbolic relationship with indigenous knowledge (Bassey 2025). The uniqueness of indigenous crafts for costume design with regards to performances is accentuated by relevant natural materials and elements. Ekeke and Ekeke insist that “the material aspect and the unique African traditional and cultural flavour can be seen from crafts and relics” (2025: p33).

The natural material aspect has to do with woven leaves, fibres, feathers, woods, etc. as well as traditional techniques in dyeing, embroidery and carving in order to create the desired crafts to reflect identity, status, and connection to the people’s culture. This sums up Ekeke et al. position that “in the course of life experiences, man do depict culture consciously and/or unconsciously; this situates culture and identity as active indices in the formation of lived narratives” (2026: p1). Within the context of this study, costume design from indigenous crafts is linked to the culture of a people because of the uniqueness in helping to identify a group of people from another. Relatively, Ekeke asserts that “costume helps to depict the place and time setting of the story. The culture of the performer as well as determine the social class of the character being depicted” (2026: p3). The role of costume designs from locally sourced materials as worn or applied during performances enhance the communication of vital information about the distinction of the performances and help in promoting the culture of the people

Indigenous crafts give birth to local products that reflect traditional manual skills of people or community that is synonymous with indigenous technology – crafts that with hand and through manual skills as developed by a certain people. It is pertinent to observe that the modern and contemporary period has witnessed the production of crafts aided with technological inventions. Interestingly these technological products also have diverse styles, patterns, designs, colours in display with a large sense of creativity compared to the indigenous crafts. However the indigenous crafts and technological crafts are uniquely outstanding and can be identified in styles, texture, patterns, designs and colours.

People from different cultures, through their indigenous crafts, have their different costume designs to identify their uniqueness and to communicate their cultural values during performances. In accordance with other scholars, Edward Wright adds that “Costume must fit the period, the season, occasion and mood of the scene” (1963: p162). Scene in this context implies the entire performance. Ikot Ekpene Raffia products, as indigenous crafts from locally sourced raw materials, have been long produced locally and put into different usages. Raffia products of Ikot Ekpene like raffia belt, hats, shoes, handbags, legal wigs, toys as well as in furniture and other furnishing items are widely known and have enjoyed both domestic and international recognition because of their unique traditional designs and outstanding quality.

In Raffia crafted products, the elements of costume design are well incorporated to adorn various artistic

performances on demand and properly explored through aesthetic relevance, artistic values and their uniqueness in order to prove them suitable as veritable tools in the performances as well as showcasing the relevance of character representation where applied and most especially in cultural promotion. Apart from the primary function of costume being designed for adornment by performers for character transformation to enhance an outdoor cultural and theatrical performance, design elements for costume as in the case of indigenous crafts from Raffia Products play important role through aesthetics, artistic styles and tradition. In addition to the reasons mentioned above and taking cognizance of the importance of producing crafts locally, this work shall examine and explore beyond all other functions, the various crafts, craft designs and crafting processes of Raffia products from locally-sourced raw materials in Ikot Ekpene, Akwa Ibom State, with emphasis on costume design for artistic performances.

Analysis of Costume Design

The importance of costume design to artistic performances cannot be over emphasized as it remains the most personal and relatively non-verbal for and among visual elements in the theatre. For the purpose of this research work, theoretical framework on costume design shall be considered based on Fabric and Non-Fabric materials classification - for specific purposes and occasions – and not everyday attire worn primarily to cover the body. The use of costume in different strata of society has gone beyond mere beautification

of oneself and achieving a sense of contentment manner and degree of decoration. A great number of elements are imperative in costume design applications.

Costume design in the context of this work implies the creating and selecting of garments, props, accessories, masks, colours and fabrics as well as artistically constructing them for performers in theatre to visually tell a story, develop characters and establishing the world of the production. The theoretical framework in this regard shall apply Russel Douglas' submission that costume includes "all the accessories he (the performer) carries as part of his character, all the items related to his hair, dressing ... including mask if they are substitutes for facial make-up" (1993: p9).

In contemporary times, costume has been classified into Fabric and Non-Fabric materials – Fabric materials are sourced from textile products like clothing while Non-Fabric materials are sourced from leaves, fibre, hide and skin. Costume interestingly has diverse styles, patterns, designs, colours in display with a large sense of creativity. It has functional purposes in all human experiences including culture. Different cultures have different costumes to identify their uniqueness and to communicate their cultural values. To affirm this disposition, Plumette asserts that "Costumes are minor arts and they talk much about a people or culture and times in which they lived" (1980: p292). Costume evolved through the various historical periods to become the vital design component in today's world and most especially on the area of performances in theatre. Costume is complementary and frequently special to

many organized theatrical productions and the designs are symbolic – capable of reflecting the status, the position, historical or cultural references of characters in a production.

In accordance with other scholars, Edward Wright adds that “Costume must fit the period, the season, occasion and mood of the scene” (1963: p162). Also, costume design is not basically or simply for the exaggeration of the fabrics on the body of a performer but that which is inspired by the theoretical concept of Earl Allensworth which can be related to “the culmination and outward expression of all thought and evaluation that has gone into his study of a role” (1982: p296) as applicable. As such, costume design forms a very important aspect in performances, whether it is on stage, film, festival or cultural display. Performers often use costumes as designed in such a way that they depict their different characteristic roles to a performance. The elements of costume help in adorning various theatrical performances are properly explored through aesthetic relevance, artistic values, and based on their uniqueness, in order to prove them as veritable tools especially in the depiction of culture in a theatrical performance. Within the scope of this paper, costume design comprises Fabric and Non-Fabric accessories in terms of clothing, headwear, body decoration and footwear, etc., which throughout ages have provided a broad overview of costume traditions of diverse cultures from pre-historic periods to contemporary times. Costume, according to Stephen Inegbe and Dora Markson, “can be considered as an occasional robe reserved for a specific purpose at specific occasions. It differed from usual everyday

attire worn primarily to cover the body” (Akoh and Inegbe 2013: p73) A performer wears a costume to portray a character or relay a message to the audience and costume possesses the value of capturing the audience attention, intensifying their mood and conveying the message through non-verbal means.

According to Michael Gillette, costume design is more than designing the dressing of the character which most specifically includes clothing, underclothing, hair dressing, make-up and accessories such as hat, scarves, fans, canes, umbrellas and other items. (1992: p385). Costume design is basically a visual phenomenon of the performing arts – this visual aspect communicates directly to the audience – being the first point of contact between the character and the spectator. Costume design from indigenous craft showcases cultural aesthetics, artistic values and traditional representation of a people – it is a metaphor for cultural space that provides an identity and consciousness among the people. It is a known fact that when worn by people of a particular ethnicity, costume design reflects them and accentuates the aesthetics and artistic nature of that ethnic group. Douglas affirms this position when he states that:

Costumes provide the identification of the period in which the play occurs, establish the locale of a production, point the time of the day, establish the social class and economic status of the characters, establish occupation, establish the age of the characters, help clarify the relationship and can as well point out the

importance of the various characters through emphasis and subordination (2005: p9-10).

The position of Douglas as stated above is quite applicable in this context because a careful analysis of costume design in a performance is built around the communicative values and significant features of the elements used. Costume design is one of the key components to the unique experience associated with performance. Designing costumes for performance is simply for the body of a performer to enhance their appearance. It also aids the audience's insight into the character's age, social status, occupation, period and other identifications. According to Francis Hodge, "provides audience with its primitive visual idea of a character, the frame of reference from which dramatic actions emerge" (1988: p259). It is however pertinent to observe here that costume design helps in complementing make-up with the synergy to emphasize the values and functions in aesthetic realization for artistic productions - drawing a performer's characterization to suit his/her role, heightening and improving the performer's appearance, without altering the appearance. It retains the performer's physical appearance before the audience and enhances make-believe. But costume designed for character in a performance serves among others the basic functions of characterizing the performer, distinguishing and distorting, changing and altering the performer's appearance - producing an artistically created character.

Costume designs from indigenous crafts are cultural ambassadors in that they

both communicate the culture depicted in their designs to the audience. This is the point Plumette (1980: p292) has made when he asserts that "Costume are minor arts and they tell much about a people or culture and times in which they lived". The implication is that costumes are used to indicate the ethnic groups in which a performance is set in showcasing their peculiarities. Among other functions, costume design reveals the status and personality of the performers. According to Wilson, "as clothes do in everyday life, costumes can tell us whether people are from aristocracy or the working class, whether they are blue collar or professionals. But in theatre, these signals must be clear and unmistakable ... The costume ... must indicate the exact occupation by giving the doctor a stethoscope for instance" (1979: p358).

From Wilson's assertion above, costume design helps in identifying the profession and occupation of the wearer. The position of Gillette is acceptable on the fact that individuals and characters can be set apart by how they are costumed because "social status has always been indicated with cloths. Some dressed in shabby, ill-kept clothes of rough homespun materials would rarely be mistaken for a member of the upper class. A woman dressed in beautifully fashioned linen, silks and satins would rarely be mistaken for a servant" (Gillette 1992: p383). According to Wilson "Costumes indicate the period and location of a play" (1979: p357). Costume design connotes the conscious production of required elements in a manner that affects or appeals to the human sense of beauty. As such, costume design helps to indicate class, culture

and tells about the personalities of the performers involved. It denotes the use of design elements to counteract nature for expression, presentation and representation of characters during performance.

Indigenous Raffia Craft of Ikot Ekpene

Raffia craft is an indigenous occupation to the people of Ikot Ekpene in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. Raffia crafts have been put into different usages and products: raffia belt, hats, shoes, handbags, legal wigs, toys as well as furniture and other furnishing items. According to Eboh and Inyang “Raffia leather, straw materials and beads are used in making decorative bags, mats, hats and caps (2024: p108). The raw materials for Raffia productions are extracted from Raffia palm fronds, dyed as may be desired’ and weaving is done manually by the use of a simple loom (Ekanem 1994: p15). This means that weaving and dyeing of Raffia and other fibres for the production of apparel are popular among the people as in the case of Ikot Ekpene. The local weavers have demonstrated great skills in the execution of wide-ranging woven design motifs. The art of indigenous crafts like in the case of Raffia products from Ikot Ekpene for body adornment has existed in the traditional society of Akwa Ibom State over the years. The local Raffia craftsmen have made use of Raffia fibre (indigenous raw material) to make different artistic products such as sandals, shoes, hats, chairs, tables, cupboards, mats and other related items. Mat-making, for example, is specially made for use as floor mats and ceilings - they are also made to be used for sleeping and are highly different from the

frond mats for roofing. The raw material for this Raffia mat is often the bye-product of aya stem – through which the mats are beautifully made. However, the stiffer aya stem is used for the production of a special ceiling called iboto. In view of this fact, Edet Udo states that:

The presence of screw-pine along the Cross River banks afforded an opportunity for the weaving of sleeping mats from their leaves. Western Nsit clan, especially Edebom and the neighbouring villages, made sleeping mats from aya, a plant with single leaf. The bark of the fleshy stem was used for sleeping mats which were durable than mats made from the raffia palm leaves, collection of thatch for the making of roofing mats, cloths, bags; and ntinya for abong members were also woven from raffia (1993: p227).

It is pertinent to observe that though raffia remains largely untapped, the potential for export are really vast. These raffia products are initially made for local use by artisans, but presently, it has been produced and called “Tourists Crafts”. The Raffia fronds are also used in the production of traditional umbrellas, blinds, racks, ornamental lamp shades, storage baskets as well as other functions in interior decoration. Besides, all indigenous crafts from raffia products are properly styled as they may be customized on request by consumers (buyers) and are more elegant to behold. Raffia products are also used in designing trophies for awards.

Selected Indigenous Raffia Craft Products for Costume Design

Raffia Hat (Ujad Itam): Raffia hat as a costume design is indigenously crafted for

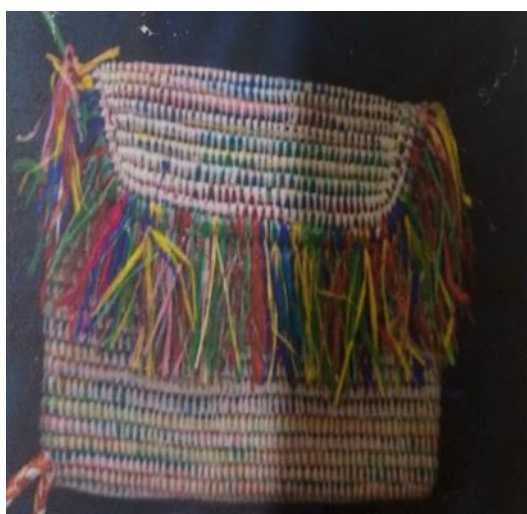
characters to reflect social status, age, office and ceremonial roles.



Different styles of hats are made to be worn traditionally by chiefs, dancers, drummers as well as masquerade attendants during artistic performances. Most of these raffia hats are often decorated with feathers, shells, beads or animal symbols to enhance visual appeal.

Raffia Bag, Pouches and Accessories (Ekpat Ubok):

These Raffia products from indigenous craft are specifically and traditionally made as costume design for carrying of personal belongings, ritual objects or items by actors.



The local artisans from Ikot Ekpene creatively reinforce these items with leather straps,

wooden fasteners or decorative beads and are all designed as costumes in different sizes for the intended artistic purposes that they are made to serve.

Raffia Skirt (Asiketi): This is another traditionally invented skirt designed as costume to replicate the cultural heritage of the Ikot Ekpene people.



These skirts above are designed for costuming purpose is among the most visually dynamic indigenous crafts associated with Raffia City products. Produced from long, loosely processed raffia strands, it is intentionally left flexible in order to enhance free movement by the wearer. The fibres used in raffia skirt are bundled, layered and tied around a waistband - made from woven raffia that prioritizes motion, sound and rhythm and thus making the skirt respond dramatically to body movement of dancers and actors.

Raffia Mask (Iwuo Ekpo):

This indigenous craft represents one the outstanding famous indigenous crafts of the Ikot Ekpene people because of its symbolic and significant in cultural heritage.



These Raffia masks are traditionally designed as one of the costumes for Ekpo Masquerade – a cultural practice that is historically linked to the Annang people. Raffia masks are also used during traditional theatres, initiation ceremonies, festivals, ritual dramas, coronations of chieftaincy titles, ancestral commemorations, marriage events as well as in social and political events. However, most of the designs of raffia masks come from traditional and spiritual creativity because each mask besides the artistic nature of it, is a representation of sacred identity that links the physical beings with the spiritual beings. Raffia mask for masquerade does not work in isolation but along with other indigenous costume designs to complement its essence. Raffia mask for Masquerades plays a significant role in complementing and concealing the bearer from being identified. It is crafted to be attached to the body, covering the face, neck with accompaniments of requisite costumes for dramatic flair.

Raffia Hand-Fan (Ubok-ufum Idem):

This raffia product is creatively woven in flat or circular forms with intentional designs and is commonly used by traditional office holders, elders as well as performers.



In traditional theatre this raffia fan as costume design serves both practical and symbolic purposes - representation of traditional authority, cooling the body, ritual power, elegance and ceremonial identity. It can be significant in the accentuation of movement by dancers, complement performer's costume design and creation of visual rhythm to engage the audience members during theatrical performances.

Raffia Waistband (Njoho Isin):

This indigenous raffia costume design is specifically known to be used by traditional dancers within and outside Ikot Ekpene and Akwa Ibom State. Made from raffia flair strands, neatly knitted together with flying fringes to orchestrate the wriggling beauty of the waist during dance.



Based on the design of the costumes, tiny cymbals are spaciouly woven into the

band to give out an aesthetic sound to complement each dance step and style. Raffia waist bands of different costume designs are used in many cultural events, festivals, coronations and traditional ceremonies by cultural dancers.

Raffia Knee-band (Njoho Edong Ukot):

This product is made for performance usage. Similar to Raffia waistband but in a smaller size to be tight in the knee region by traditional dancers for cultural significance and aesthetic demand. Nearly all cultural groups in Nigeria use it in their various performances during festivals, carnivals, cultural exhibitions. The tiny rattles woven into the raffia strands help to produce a synchronizing sound during dance.



Raffia Ankle-band (Njoro Itong Ukot):

This indigenous craft for costume design plays a complementary role to both waist and ankle bands. The difference between this band and knee-band is the size but for the same purposes in terms of artistic functions. A stronger raffia rope is used in fastening this band to the body of the dancer to avoid falling off since much of the dancing pressure is felt in the ankle.

Raffia Wristband (Njoro Itong Ubok):



This costume design from raffia indigenous craft plays the same role as the ankle band but is equally smaller in size compared to it. Also, smaller raffia rope is used in fastening it to the body since the hands of a dancer are frequently in a condition of movement during the process.

4.1.10 Raffia Brazier (Ufuk Eba):

This raffia indigenous craft for costume design is a traditionally crafted creative piece with raffia fibres for of covering the breasts, which served the function of a brazier in a typical traditional performance. The piece is made in the similitude of the raffia mat, to be hung by the female wearer.



The mat is designed to be bear two semblance projection like a cup at the breast's positioning to house the breasts. Another

design of the raffia brazier can be made like a blouse to be fastened to the waist.

Raffia earring (Mpka Utong):

This raffia indigenous craft for costume design is intricately crafted to be light so as not to exert much weight and load on the earlobes of actors in a performance. In this product tiny calabashes (ntok ikim) are made to be dried after which designs are made on the body and coloured to specifications.



It is known as raffia product because besides being pinned to the ears with raffia strands, the body design of the small calabash follows the known raffia design pattern.

Raffia Necklace (Mpka Itong): This indigenous craft for costume design is a raffia ornament that is indigenously crafted to be on the neck of the bearer to showcase beauty, authority, status and other social demands.



Raffia necklace is designed with special fibre that is well synthesized to be flexible with lasting value. This raffia indigenous craft for costume design is often worn by women during traditional marriage, festival, carnival and other cultural ceremonies. However, to add more aesthetic value, cowries are interwoven into it based on prescription.

Raffia Bangle (Mkpo Itong-ubok):

This raffia indigenous craft for costume design is designed with special fibre that is well synthesized to be flexible with lasting value. It is an alternative to foreign bracelets that are flooding the Nigerian fashion space. Raffia bangles are made in different sizes, designs and colours for performers in a bid to showcase the uniqueness of cultural products.



These bangles are made in diverse colours to match different colours of the wearers' outfits. To the women, raffia bangles are worn to depict domestication and traditional grooming.

Raffia Wrapper (Afong Isin):

This raffia indigenous craft for costume design is one of the oldest forms of indigenous crafts among the Ikot Ekpene

people because of its essential nature of clothing the body – used in knotting around the waist and suspended with fringes to either the knee or ankle region.



Initially this product was original and basically for the purpose of covering the body from nakedness but later attracted various design as people became conscious of fashion but presently been designed for costume purpose in artistic productions.

Raffia Blouse (Afong Idem):

This raffia indigenous craft blouse as costume is designed for the body that is worn to cover the thorax region of the performer – from neck to the waist. This is specially made for the women to be worn during traditional ceremonies or artistic performances for depiction of culture and history.



Raffia Jacket/Jumper (Ulod Afong):

This raffia indigenous craft for costume design was originally for the male gender, but over the time is being used by the female gender and thus making it a unisex traditional product. Jacket or jumper raffia products are worn either on the bare body or on a cloth already worn especially the female folk.



Raffia jacket as a costume design, is often worn by performers in artistic productions to make a traditional or cultural statement about the personality of the character or possibly woven with symbolic bands and designs to indicate status and age of the character as well as to indicate purpose or seasonal rites.

Raffia Elbow-band (Njoho Edong Ubok):

This raffia indigenous craft for costume design is made for artistic performance like dance or to decorate the costume of traditional warrior as a character. Similar to Raffia wristband but in a bigger size to be tight in the elbow region.



Elbow bands from raffia craft are for cultural significance and aesthetic demand. Nearly all cultural groups in Nigeria use it in their various performances during festivals, carnivals, cultural exhibitions. The tiny rattles woven into the raffia strands help in producing different sound as the elbow swings or move in patterns during dance.

Raffia Footwear (Ikpa-ukot):

This raffia indigenous craft for costume design is meant for the foot and comprises both raffia customized shoes and sandals. This product is made according to the prescribed sizes, design and colours of the customer.



Both shoes and sandals, designed from raffia indigenous craft, besides being worn by

actors during artistic performance, are mostly used in special events and ceremonies like traditional marriage, festival, coronation, cultural parade, pageantry, exhibition, fashion display and carnival. In artistic performances, this costume designed footwear represents status, sex, wealth, authority and profile for the character.

Within the scope of this study, there has been a convincing attempt to make clear that indigenous crafting of Raffia products of Ikot Ekpene in Akwa Ibom State for costume design has proven to be valuable in an artistic performance. However, the paper has attempted to establish the distinctive values of locally sourced raw materials, as in the case of indigenous crafts from raffia products, for designing costume locally, and reducing the dependency on foreign costume designs and materials for theatrical productions.

Summary

In a world that is moving with pace, as can be observed in the contemporary period, dependency on foreign products can become a problem to a country in diverse dimensions, ranging from professionalism, self-sufficiency and sustainability. However, in designing costume for artistic performances, the level of dependency on imported products is enormous and of immense concern, most especially in the areas of theatrical productions and can degenerate further to a more devastating stage if an alternative cannot be locally sourced to commensurately reduce the dependency level if not completely checked.

In the same vein, indigenous craft has to do with the application of locally invented

knowledge in the process of doing things in solving problems. To this regard, focusing attention on indigenous crafts with locally sourced raw materials as alternative sources becomes paramount. Finding local alternative to costume design products for artistic production can only be achieved through the application and engagement of acquired indigenous crafts with the use of raw materials that are locally available. In the engagement of indigenous crafts for costume design for instance, the use of local raw materials requires an intensive awareness of the requisites, crafting techniques and procedure to ascertain the cocktail of quality and creativity to arrive at an acceptable standard required for such costume designs and products. This study considered the relevant Raffia products of Ikot Ekpene (Raffia City) and the engagement of indigenous crafts in designing costume that are relevant in artistic productions especially for theatrical performances. The study therefore concludes that they are native materials available to be tapped, processed and refined for effective use to replace the exotic products and provide alternatives to halt further patronage of foreign products.

Conclusion

The indigenous crafts of costume design for artistic performance from locally sourced Raffia products of Ikot Ekpene are part of the material culture of the people of Akwa Ibom State, reflecting the longstanding relationship of the people in the area with raffia palm and its creative possibilities. Raffia cultural products represent Visual Arts that

have proven the industrious and resourceful nature of Akwa Ibom State indigenous artists/entrepreneurs particularly from Raffia City which has contributed tremendously to the economic growth of the State, country and the world at large. However, the use of raffia fibres through indigenous crafts in designing costumes for artistic performances has proven that raffia products are not only for decoration and entertainment purposes.

From this research work, it has become established that traditional raffia crafts products are valuable assets not limited to the culture and tradition of the people of Ikot Ekpene but to artistry and theatrical performance in designing costumes. This work calls for the full utilization of indigenous costumes, designed from raffia crafts (in their originality), on artistic performances to help project locally made products. The impact of these indigenous crafts in performances also asserts them as important artistic embellishment for cultural expression that can project the cultural heritage of Ikot Ekpene people to the entire world and, by so doing, promote their indigenous Raffia products and traditional industry.

The uniqueness, steps, tools and indigenous techniques involved crafting these raffia products into costume designs reflect the artisans' dedications to ingenious creativity, sustainability and cultural preservation, taking into consideration the synthesis of material knowledge, cultural meaning, aesthetic innovation and craft tradition of African performance arts and indigenous identity. Pertinent to conclude here that employing indigenous crafts in designing costume for

artistic performances from locally sourced raw materials serve the purpose of identification of a particular culture and these indigenous crafts cannot only be appreciated in the aesthetics and cultural imports, but in artistic performances. Costumes designed from indigenous raffia crafts project cultures in the best way possible, by giving life to theatrical productions, thus standing out as veritable elements of cultural identity for cultural promotion. It is the submission of this study that indigenous crafts for costume design should be explored and deployed in artistic performances, to sustain traditional practices, promote ethnic identity and for cultural promotion as seen in the case study on Raffia products.

Recommendations

From the experience and lesson from this research work, it is recommended that costume designers, performing artists and theatre practitioners in Nigeria should look beyond patronizing foreign and exotic costume design products in their different productions but rather to look within to discover the potentials of using the indigenous crafts with the available local raw materials like the Raffia to get their desired costume design for artistic performances. These indigenously crafted and designed costume products are equivalent native materials available to replace the dependence on exotic costume designs and materials.

The study recommends also that the Ministry of Commerce and Industry in Nigeria should show concern in this area to help booster more research and to further discover

more local raw materials that can be locally fabricated and design as costume products to be used in the artistic productions. Also, the stakeholders in the Nigerian entertainment industry mostly in the areas of film and theatre, knowing the importance and benefits of galvanizing resources to have local costume products that can favourably compete with the exotic one, should endeavour to invest in the process of having alternative products in costume design.

The regulatory bodies and agencies established to promote various cultures like the National Council for Arts and Culture (NCAC), the National Tourism Development Corporation (NTDC) and other state Ministries of Culture and Tourism should place emphasis on reviving and sustaining our traditional industries' indigenous crafts that are aimed at bringing out products that are standard to be designed as costume for both theatrical and traditional performances.

Taking advantage of the Raffia industry, this study recommends that all ethnic nationalities in Nigeria have abundant indigenous arts and crafts that should be refined to advance cultural product, economic dependency tourism and, thus, project people's ethnic identity for cultural products and promotion. Besides advocating for the preservation of relevant costume designs from Raffia products, it is also the researcher's recommendation that this work be added to existing literature in the discourse on Raffia products and indigenous crafts for costume designs in Theatrical performances.

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