

# FABRIC FASHION TRENDS IN AWKA AND AMAWBIA, ANAMBRA STATE: ANALYSIS OF THE MOST PREFERRED FABRIC BETWEEN ANKARA AND LACE

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## **Abstract**

Fashion and textiles are important aspects of our material culture which can reflect our ways of life and identity. The 21<sup>st</sup> Century has witnessed a new wave of self - assertion among the Nigerian fashion enthusiasts. This is displayed in their style of dressing which strongly expresses their identity and individualism. Although some traditional costumes remain specific to a particular ethnic group, Ankara and lace are a common uniting fabric that all Nigerians, regardless of ethnicity, tend to wear. It is however unclear which of the two fabrics, Ankara or Lace, is preferred in Anambra state and the reasons behind such preferences. The purpose of the study is to determine the fashion trends as it relates to the most preferred fabric between Ankara and lace materials and also determine if there is any significant difference in the preference for Ankara material over Lace material among fashion enthusiasts within Awka and Amawbia. The study employed a mixed research design, a combination of both qualitative and quantitative research design. Primary data were collected from churches and fashion centres randomly selected within Awka and Amawbia. A comparative analysis of the number of people that wore or patronize Ankara and Lace materials were made. Descriptive statistics of frequencies and percentages were used in data analysis. Conclusion drawn from the data analysis is that the fabric and fashion trend in the study area shows more people prefer Ankara fabrics to lace fabrics, because it is not only used in making outfits for special occasions, but it is also used for every day wear and even official wears. It was also observed that gown is also trending among the females in the study area.

**Keywords:** Fabric, Fashion, Trends, Ankara, lace,

## **Introduction**

Clothing is a significant component of human activity and people dress for many reasons. In addition to the usual weather protection, people dress to show off their individuality, class, or identity. Nigeria is one of many African countries that have been impacted by the west in a variety of areas, including fashion. This was evident among the earliest African elites who attempted to emulate the clothing habits of the colonial masters. However, interest in wearing traditional Nigerian clothing made from African fabric and designs has steadily grown over the past ten years up to the present. Traditional Nigerian clothing has undergone modifications to become more modern, yet some traditional costumes remain specific to particular ethnic groups. For example, attire made of *Isi-Agu* and *Akwete*, a distinctive hand-woven fabric, is associated with Igbo people from the south-east, while *Iro* and *buba*, *adire*, *asoke*, *agbada*, and *gele* are associated with Yoruba people from the south-west. *Danshiki* and *babanriga*, made of brocade fabrics are also associated with people from northern Nigeria. These traditional attires are often reserved for important occasions, while Ankara and lace are a common uniting fabric that all Nigerians, regardless of ethnicity, tend to wear. Ankara is employed in this context to represent all cotton fabrics with wax prints of following brands, Da Viva, Hollandaise, Dutch wax prints, Vlisco, Abc wax, and Hi-Target. In the past years in Awka and Amawbia, lace materials were mostly used as blouse to be worn with two piece wrappers, while Ankara materials also known as Abada material

in south eastern part of the country were mostly used as wrappers or used for blouse and wrapper. However, using lace and Ankara materials, contemporary fashion designers made a variety of changes to the traditional garments that redefined them and allowed people from all over the country to customize them to their own tastes. While these adaptations occasionally incorporate aspects of western and oriental styles, modern Nigerian fashion designers largely draw inspiration from indigenous textiles and clothing. African fabrics, such the 100% cotton Ankara fabric, Hollandaise, Dutch wax prints, Vlisco, Abc wax and others with a blend of man-made fibers featuring African themes and vibrant colors, have recently attracted the attention of Nigerian modern fashion designers, and Anambra state is not an exception. It is clear that wearing clothing adorned with Ankara fabrics and lace is fashionable today, contrary to previous years when fashion fans opted for imported ready-made materials. What is unclear is which of the two fabrics, Ankara or Lace, is preferred in the Anambra state and the reasons behind such preferences.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The use of African textiles for diverse culturally influenced outfits has recently received considerable emphasis from modern African and Nigerian fashion designers, and the Igbo people are following suit. Researchers who had earlier studied customer fabric preferences compared imported or foreign textiles with fabrics created in Nigeria most frequently. Contrarily, a study done in Osogbo by Adeoti (2022) revealed that more ladies wear lace than Ankara cloth during church services. However, because fashion is dependent on place and time, a cloth that is popular in one region may not be as well-liked in another. In other words, fashion is the prevailing style within a given culture at a certain moment, and can also include the favorite textile fabric in a given area, according to the Britannica Dictionary. Here lace and Ankara fabrics are the subject of this investigation.

The research areas are Awka and Amawbia towns, both located in Awka South LGA and within the capital territory of Anambra state. Due to the fact that researchers haven't focused on this facet of fashion, it's unclear which sort of fabric is more popular in the study area and what drives this desire. The lack of available material on the fabric fashion trend in the state served as the inspiration for this study. With a focus on the adult population in Awka and Amawbia, the study tries to ascertain the most popular fabric between lace and Ankara in terms of current fashion trends, and factors that influence the preference of fabric.

### **Objectives of the study**

Objectives of this study include the following;

1. To determine the number of people that wore Ankara fabrics in churches visited
2. To determine the number of people that wore lace fabric in churches visited
3. To determine the most patronized fabric between Ankara and Lace material in the fashion centres visited
4. To determine factors that influences the preference for fabric.

### **Literature Review**

The terms textile and fabric are frequently used interchangeably. Mbelu (2005) defined a textile as any filament, fibre, or yarn that may be turned into fabric or cloth as well as the finished product itself. According to Swami (2011), who wrote about the history of textiles, the word "textiles" comes from the latin words "Textileis" and "Texere," both of which are used to describe weaving or woven cloth. Therefore, textile fabric refers to all woven fabrics, whether they are made of wool, cotton, silk, jute, rayon, or other man-made fibers. Elmogahzy, (2020) defined Textile fabric as two-dimensional plane-like structure made of textile materials, having reasonable strength, elongation, flexibility, etc., used for different applications, particularly for apparels. Denomme (2021) on the other hand is of the opinion

that textile fabric is a cloth that has been woven or non-woven (knitted, tufted, knotted, or bonded together). Natural or synthetic threads, yarn or other materials can be used to make the fabric's components. Although some modern ankara fabrics are now created with mixtures of synthetic fibres, most are still made with 100% cotton fibre. In the same vein, some lace materials, such as baby lace, are created entirely of cotton fibres, while others are also made with mixtures of man-made fibres. As a result, these two materials are categorized as textiles or fabrics.

### **Fashion or Style**

As a result of the overlap between fashion and style, the two terms are frequently used interchangeably. Jacob, Diane, and France (2021) contend that whereas fashion is more collective, style is more personal. An individual's personal style serves as a vehicle for self-expression. The person in question could be a fashion designer or someone else entirely. Their style is evident in how they present themselves and dress. Jacob *et al* (2021). Contrarily, fashion refers to the prevalent style within a certain society at a particular time. It refers to the popular fashion trends of the time. Style in general refers to a person's unique manner of expressing themselves or the way something is done. This might be communicated through their manner of writing, architecture, or even dress. In the context of fashion, style refers to the aesthetic choices that an individual or a group makes to represent their identity. For instance, in their appearance, which includes their choice of clothing, jewelry, and hairstyles, as well as how they put attire together. Although Yoruba, Igbo, and Hausa are the three main ethnic groups in Nigeria, there are other tribes as well. One characteristic that sets one ethnic group apart from another is their style of dressing. People's desire to look unique and alluring is driven by a fundamental impulse, for this reason, some trendy individuals stick to their own aesthetic preferences regardless of what is popular. Prof. Ngozi Okonjo-Iwuala is a prime example of this type of person because of her distinctive and individual sense of style.

Regardless of fashion, style is something that is particular to a person or group of individuals. Nonetheless, the lines between fashion and style are blurry, because there is a connection between fashion and style. According to Sumathi (2010), fashion is a style that has the ability to draw attention and be imitated. For instance, a person's personal sense of style in clothing might become fashionable if it inspires others to follow suit. In other words, a style turns into fashion whenever it is approved and worn by sufficient number of the population. Yet, because it is the dominant style within a specific culture at a specific period, fashion is influenced by place and time. While fashion is timely, style is timeless. For instance, despite changes in fashion, the Igbo women's style of dressing with a two-layer wrapper and matching top has endured over time. Similar to the northern caftan style or the *Iro* and *buba* dress of Yoruba women.

### **Trends**

Simple definitions of trends include the overall direction in which something is moving or a pattern of behavior that is spreading. Trend is defined as a general tendency in the direction that a situation is evolving or developing towards (Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, Second Impression 2009). According to Campos and Wolf (2018), the word "trend" first appeared in 1936 in a magazine of the same name. The magazine was published by the DIA (Design and Industrial Association, founded in 1915). Erner cited in Campos and Wolf (2018) states that trends are convergences of want and taste that are defined by cycles of varying duration and rapid modification. On the other hand, according to Gomes (2017), trends are representations of creativity and innovation in the socio cultural environment that signify a change in cultural behavior and thinking. Yet, trends are frequently linked to the concepts of innovation or fashion. In the world of fashion, a "trend" is a pattern of

behavior that emerges from the elements of a certain environment over a given length of time. It may also allude to items that are currently or soon will be in vogue Okeke (2023). Trends are thus fresh, a new development, and different from what they were in the past. The movement in preferences and interests of fashion lovers in Awka and Amawbia, Anambra state, which is reflected in their choice of style or fabric at a specific period, can be summed up as the cause of the fabric and fashion trends in Awka and Amawbia. Alternatively, it refers to the textiles and materials that modern consumers want and are willing to buy.

### **Theoretical Framework**

In order to provide a theoretical explanation for the study, this research will be based on the Theory of Planned Behavior, or TPB. This is a psychological theory that connects behavior and belief proposed by Icek Ajzen in 1985. In many different disciplines, it is commonly utilized to anticipate human behavior. An individual's visible actions are referred to as their behavior. According to theory of planned behavior there are three important factors that influence a consumer's intention to engage in a behavior in the context of this study (to buy or not buy a particular type of fabric). These are attitude towards the target behaviour, Subjective Norms about engaging in the behavior and Perceived Behaviour Control.

The Theory of Planned behavior states that the first factor in predicting a consumer's intention is their attitude toward the action in question. This could simply mean that they have a positive or negative opinion of engaging in the conduct in question. As a consumer's views are thought to influence their attitude toward an action, attitudes toward that conduct are essentially evaluated by measuring their beliefs.

The Theory of Planned behavior lists Subjective Norms as the second predictor of consumer intention. This measure relates to the customer's perception of whether the majority of people accept or disapproves of the conduct. Within the framework of this study, social pressure associated with trends and the want to follow them could be interpreted as the source of these approvals.

According to the Theory of Planned Behavior, perceived behavioral control is the third component that affects consumers' intentions. This is the perception of the existence of elements that could facilitate or obstruct the performance of an action based on the consumer's estimate of how hard or simple the action will be to accomplish. It is the degree to which the consumer thinks they can carry out the conduct; it differs depending on the circumstance and the act in question. Miller (2020) states that beliefs derived from prior experiences related to the activity or from seeing others' experiences related to the conduct also have an impact on perceived behavioral control. For instance, even in cases where a customer is able to afford lace fabric, they will not buy it if they feel that they will not be able to afford it.

The Theory of Planned Behavior was chosen as the theoretical foundation for this investigation because it offers a means of investigating the impact that attitudes, individual and cultural factors, and deliberate control have on consumers' intentions to purchase Ankara or Lace fabric within the research area.

### **Incursion of Lace and Ankara into the Nigerian Fashion Scene**

Lace is a fabric created by weaving together a variety of threads or yarns to create intricate designs. Lace, according to Rofiquazzam (2020), is "an open fabric constructed of a web of yarns woven into complex patterns. Lace can be produced manually or artificially." In contrast, Master Class (2021) defines lace as "a delicate fabric made of yarn or thread that features open designs and patterns constructed using various techniques." What is known as lace in Nigeria today actually refers to industrial embroideries which according to Plankensteiner (2013) are "a product of Nigeria- Austrian fabric creation that originated

from the Austrian province of Vorarlberg.” According to Onuoha (2017), “lace was first used in Nigerian fashion in the late 1950s, but the oil boom in the late 1960s helped it gain popularity”. Plankensteiner (2013) had earlier expressed similar opinion by stating that the establishment of wealthy middle class after Nigerian Independence in the 1960 contributed to the flourishing of lace market in Nigeria. Nigeria is made up of numerous ethnic groups, each of which has own cultural beliefs and traditions that are represented in their style of dressing. Although modernity and migration allowed various ethnic groups to interchange ideas and clothing styles, each ethnic group nonetheless kept some elements of their traditional clothing and dress sense that are unique to them. Examples of traditional Yoruba clothing include the *Adire*, *Iro and Buba*, *Asoke*, *Gele*, *Ipele (Sash)*, *Sokoto*, and *Agbada*. The Igbo people of south-eastern Nigeria are renowned for their attire, which includes a matching blouse made primarily of lace, the *Akwete*, *Isi-agu*, Indian George or madras, and *Abada* or hollandaise two-layer wraps. However, the use of lace is not peculiar to Igbo people; several ethnic groups use this material in different ways to create their clothing. For instance, at a time lace was widely accepted by the Yoruba people that it nearly replaced their traditional indigo-dyed fabric. Today lace material has gained recognition in the Nigerian fashion scene that it is widely accepted among all the ethnic groups in Nigeria. Adebisi (2022) buttressed this assertion by stating that lace fabrics are very popular name in the Nigerian fashion industry. There are different types of laces which come in different forms, which include tulle, cord, paper, guipure, sequined, beaded, jute, George, and French laces. A good number of others come in combined colours or in a combination of types, for example tulle and guipure.

Similarly Ankara fabrics which are widely accepted in Nigeria and other African country did not also originate from Africa. Before the Dutch colonized Indonesia, batik, according to Nnewihe (2020), was predominantly produced and sold in Indonesia and other regions of Asia. But, having recognized the value of the batik cloth during the Dutch occupation of Indonesia (1800–1955), the Dutch created a machine to replicate the batik effect in an effort to outsell the Indonesian batik in the local market. Because the quality of the machine-produced resin-coated fabrics was inferior to that of genuine Indonesian batik, they could not achieve the targeted sales. By 1880, Dutch and Scottish businessmen started introducing the materials to West African ports, where they were well-received. Zakari (2022) corroborated this assertion by stating that “Ankara, which was formerly known as 'Dutch wax print', was originally manufactured by the Dutch for the Indonesian textile market however these prints garnered more interest in West Africa than in Indonesia.” This might be because of certain aspects of Indonesian fashion that is closely mirrored in African fashion. For instance, they have their version of *Akwete* which is called *Ulos* and *Adire* which is called *Sasirangan* (Nnewihe, 2020). But today in Nigeria the name Ankara is now representing all wax prints imitating the real Dutch wax prints. Ankara has gained so much recognition in Nigeria and African in general that it is regarded by some people as an indigenous fabric. For instance, Adebisi (2022) writing on traditional fabrics found in Nigerian market made mention of Ankara fabrics.

### Empirical Review

Akinmoye, Ojo and Oginduyile, (2016) Undertook a study to analyze consumer’s preference for contemporary textile to handcrafted textile products in Abeokuta south western Nigeria for group outfit also known as (aso-ebi) Findings from analysis of the data indicated that preference of consumers tend to favour contemporary textile products such as Ankara, African prints, lace, damask among others over handcrafted textile products such as *Asoke*, and *Adire*. Because out of the 83 respondents 39 (47%) and 38 (45%) agreed and strongly agreed that contemporary textile materials are more fashionable. The comparison was mainly between handcrafted textile and contemporary textiles. Ozo, Egele, & Udu, (2018)

carried out a research on the quality factor in consumers' Preference of textile fabrics, where a comparative evaluation of consumer preference for domestic and imported textile fabrics (wrappers) in Abakaliki, Ebonyi State was made. Female respondents from eighteen (18) years and above were sampled in the study, who used ten attributes constituting consumer evaluation criteria to rate the attributes and quality of domestic and imported wrappers.

After testing the hypotheses with respect to the products' attributes and quality, the researchers observed from the result and findings that imported wrappers were rated higher in terms of three critical attributes (durability, colour-fastness and texture) that determine quality. It was concluded therefore that there is a significant difference between imported and domestic wrappers with respect to quality. The emphasis of the study was on imported textile fabrics and domestic fabrics. Zhao, Yin, and Ikiz (2020) made a study on consumers' preference towards summer shirts fabrics and their characteristics. Gender impact, visual impact and tactile impact toward the preference of fabric were separately studied. A total number of 18 pieces of fabrics commonly used for making summer shirts were employed for the study. It was tested by 50 participants under visual and tactile system. From the results of the findings it was concluded that fabric structure is a significant factor to influence customer's preference towards a fabric. It was also discovered that female customers are particularly sensitive to visual details as essential factors that affect their fabric preferences. However the research was based on fabric type used specifically for making shirt.

Adeoti, (2022) carried out a comparative study of occurrence of Ankara, Lace and other fabrics in Christian worship centres in Osogbo. Analysis of the data collected from 500 worshippers selected for the study showed that 180 people wore Ankara, 195 wore lace while 125 wore other contemporary fabrics. This indicates that more people prefer lace fabric for Sunday service in Osogbo. It was also observed that more women wore Ankara and lace materials to church than the men. Nevertheless, men wear Ankara and lace fabrics but majority of them prefer to wear other contemporary fabrics to the church on Sunday. The research is similar to this study; however the area of study is Osogbo a town in South Western Nigeria while this research is focused in Awka and Amawbia towns in South Eastern Nigeria. Since fashion is subject to place and time, some fabrics that are popular in a particular region might not enjoy same level of acceptance in another region.

## Methodology

The study adopted exploratory and descriptive research design. For the gathering of data, both qualitative and quantitative methods were employed. Primary data were collected from 7 churches and 7 fashion centres randomly selected within Awka and Amawbia. The churches are:

1. Church of Pentecost. GRA, Agu Awka
2. St Thomas the Aquinas Catholic Church, GRA, Agu Awka
3. The Redeemed Christian Church of God House of Faith Parish, Commissioners Quarters, Awka
4. Chapel of Glory Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka
5. St Peters Anglican Church, Amawbia
6. St Joseph Catholic Church ,Amawbia
7. Dunamis Church State Headquarters, Amawbia

The church was chosen because people put on their best attire to church service; therefore it is a suitable place to feel the pulse of fashion trend. The churches were visited on different days and 200 first attendees in each church were used as sample making a total of 1400 respondents. The study made a comparative analysis of the number of people that wore Ankara and Lace materials in the churches visited using male and female adults as the target population.

**The fashion and tailoring centers are:**

1. Merit Fashion Clothing Brand, St John of God School Road, Awka
2. Prince and Princess Fashion Designer Centre, along St John Of God School Road, Awka
3. Kirus Fashion and Tailoring Centre, No. 28 Emma Nnaemeka Street, Awka
4. House of Ladyfance Bespoke tailoring and Fashion Training, Esther Obiakor Road, Awka
5. Dezee Creation, Zik's Avenue, Amawbia
6. Juli Fashion Zik's Avenue, Amawbia
7. Magic Scissor, Fashion Centre Enugwu-Agidi Rd., Amawbia by- pass.

In order to get a comprehensive data about fashion and fabric trend in the study area, interviews were also carried out in random selected fashion centres in Awka and Amawbia where these fabrics are made to ascertain which fabric between Ankara and lace is presently more patronized by their customers.

**Analysis of Data****Table 1**

Analysis of Preference for Ankara and Lace Fabrics based on Gender							
S/ N	Church	Ankara		Lace		Ankara Combined With Lace	
		F	M	F	M	F	M
1.	Church of Pentecost GRA Agu Awka	93	36	28	-	6	-
2.	St Thomas the Aquinas Catholic Church GRA Agu Awka	75	39	15	2	9	
3.	The Redeemed Christian Church of God House of Faith Parish Commissioners Quarters Awka.	48	15	8	-	2	
4.	Chapel of Glory Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka	82	35	16	-	4	
5.	St Peters Anglican Church Amawbia	69	35	14	1	7	-
6.	St Joseph Catholic Church Amawbia	60	22	16	4	7	-
7.	Dunamis Church State Headquarters Amawbia	78	41	24	4	11	
	<b>Total</b>	505 (36.1 %)	223 (15.9 %)	121 (8.6 %)	11 (0.8 %)	46 (3.3 %)	- (0% )

The result in table 1 indicates the number of males and females that wore Ankara and lace attires in each of the church visited for this study. At Church of Pentecost for instance 93 female wore Ankara attire while male that wore Ankara fabric were 36. On the other hand, 28 females wore lace attires, 6 females wore attires with combination of lace and Ankara fabric, but no male wore lace attire. At St Thomas the Aquinas Catholic Church the number of females that wore Ankara attires were 75 (see plate 2d) while the male was 39, 15 females and 2 males were on lace attire, 9 females wore attires in the combination of lace and Ankara fabrics. At RCCG House of Faith 48 females and 15 males wore Ankara outfits, (see plates 2a, 2b and 2c), 8 females wore lace attires, no male appeared in lace attire, and 2 females also appeared in attires with the combination of lace and Ankara fabric. At Chapel of Glory 82 females wore Ankara attires, while males in Ankara were 35. The number of females that appeared in lace attires was 16, males none, 4 females also appeared in attires with combination of lace and Ankara.

At St Peters Anglican Church 69 females appeared in Ankara while the males are 35, (see plates 1a and 1b) the number of females that wore lace attires was 14, (see plate 3a and 3b) only 1 male wore lace attire and 7 females' attires had a combination of lace and Ankara fabric. The number of females that appeared in Ankara fabrics at St Joseph Catholic Church was 60 while the males were 22 (See plate 3c and 3d). 16 females and 4 males on the other hand wore lace attires, 7 females also appeared in attires with the combination of lace and Ankara fabric. At Dunamis Church 78 females appeared in Ankara dress, while the males that wore Ankara attires were 41. (See plate 4b). 24 females wore lace attires while 4 males wore lace attires (see plate 4a), 11 females also appeared in attires with the combination of lace and Ankara fabric. Inference drawn from the results in table 1 is that Ankara fabric is popular among the males and females from the study area; however greater percentage (36.1%) of female prefers Ankara fabric than the 15.9% male folk. 8.6% females out of the 1400 respondents used for this study wore lace fabric while males are only 0.8% which is not significant. Thus it can be deduced that although lace fabric is also worn in the study area, it is not as popular as Ankara fabrics particularly among the male folk.

**Table 2**

S/N	CHURCH	ANKARA	LACE	ANKARA COMBINED WITH LACE
1.	Church of Pentecost GRA Agu Awka	129	28	6
2.	St Thomas the Aquinas Catholic Church GRA Agu Awka	114	17	9
3.	The Redeemed Christian Church of God House of Faith Zone Commissioners Quarters Awka.	63	8	2
4.	Chapel of Glory Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka	117	16	4
5.	St Peters Anglican Church Amawbia	104	15	7
6.	St Joseph Catholic Church Amawbia	82	20	7
7.	Dunamis Church State Headquarters Amawbia	119	28	11
	<b>Total</b>	728 (52%)	132(9.4%)	46 (3.2%)

The result in table 2 shows that out first 200 worshippers that attended church service at Church of Pentecost on the 12<sup>th</sup> of March 2023, 129 (64.5%) wore attires made from Ankara fabric, 28(14%) wore attires made from lace materials, 6 (3%) wore attires made with a combination of lace and Ankara fabrics. The remaining wore other type of fabrics which are not the focus of this research. Data collected from St Thomas the Aquinas Catholic church on the 12<sup>th</sup> of march 2023 reveals that 114(57%) wore attires made from Ankara fabric, 17(8.5%) wore attires made from lace while 9(4.5%) had attires with combination of Ankara and lace materials. At House of Faith Parish of RCCG on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of April 2023, 63 (31.5%) wore Ankara attires, 8(4%) wore attires made from lace material while 2 (1%) people wore attires in combination of Ankara and lace materials. On 22<sup>nd</sup> of April 2023 at Chapel of Glory a total number of 117 (58.5%) people wore Ankara attire, 16(8%) wore lace attire while 4 (2%) wore attires made with the combination of lace and Ankara.

The visit to St Peters Church on the 26<sup>th</sup> March 2023 revealed that 104 (52%) people wore attires made of Ankara fabric, 15(7.5%) wore attires made of lace fabric while 7 (3.5%) wore attires in combination of lace and Ankara materials. At St Joseph Catholic Church on 19<sup>th</sup> of March 2023, 82 (41%) people out of the first 200 worshippers that attended church



service wore attires made from Ankara, 20 (10%) wore lace attires, while 7(3.5%) wore attires with the combination Ankara and lace materials. On the 26<sup>th</sup> of March 2023 at Dunamis Church State headquarters, 119 (59.5%) worshippers were in Ankara attires, 28 (14%) wore attires made of lace fabric while 11(5.5%) wore attires with combination of Ankara and lace material. Consequently, it can be deduced from table that out of the 1400 respondents used for this study based on 200 worshippers from each church, a total number of 728 (52%) wore attires made of Ankara fabrics, 132 (9.4%) wore attires made of lace fabric while 46 (3.2%) wore attires with combination of lace and Ankara fabric. The results in table 2 indicate that Ankara fabrics are trending more than lace material in the study area.



Plate1a: Worshiper in Ankara top on plain skirt  
St Peters Church Amawbia Source:



Plate1b: worshippers in Ankara Attire at  
Okeke 2023



Plate 2a: a worshipper in Ankara gown combined



Plate2b: a worshipper in Ankara gown

with plain coloured material at RCCG Commissioners Quarters Awka. Source: Okeke2021



Plate 2c: Worshippers at RCCG Commissioners Quarters Awka, in Ankara Jacket and fascinator



Plate 2d: Worshippers at Aquinas Catholic Church GRA Agu Awka, in Ankara gown

Source: Okeke2023



Plate 3a: a worshipper in lace gown



Plate 3b: a worshipper in lace attire

At St Peters Church Amawbia Source: Okeke 2023





Plate 3c: Male worshippers in Ankara Attire  
At St Joseph Catholic Church Amawbia, Source: Okeke 2023



Plate 3d: Female worshiper in Ankara attire  
At St Joseph Catholic Church Amawbia, Source: Okeke 2023

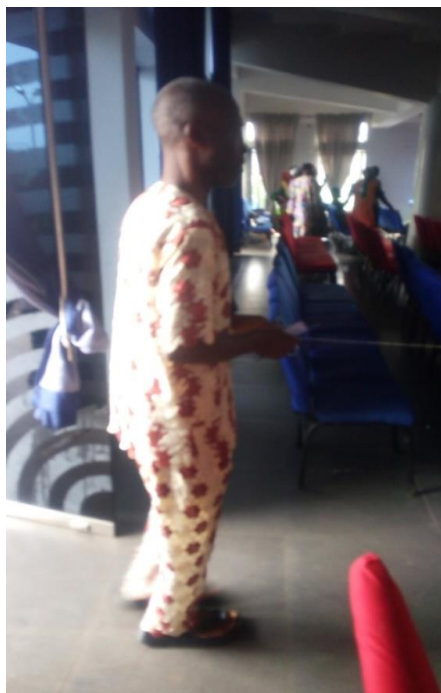


Plate 4a: A male worshiper on lace attire  
At Dunamis Amawbia Source: Okeke 2023

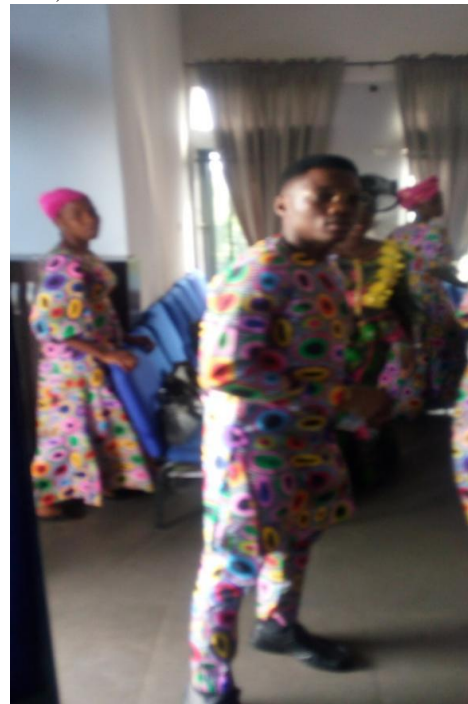


Plate 4b: worshippers on Ankara attire  
At Dunamis Amawbia Source: Okeke 2023

### **Information obtained from Interviews at Fashion Centres**

During the interview conducted with the owner of Kirus Fashion and Tailoring centre at No. 28 Emma Nnaemeka Street Awka, Nkiru Nnaegbu (personal communication, March 13<sup>th</sup>, 2023) stated that customers patronize Ankara fabrics more than lace. Nnaegbu further stated that as from 2022, she observed that Lace is gradually making a strong come

back in the fashion scene in the study area, but it may never compete with Ankara materials because Igbo women place a higher value on African prints especially hollandaise, and Dutch wax prints and now because of affordability are diverting to other Ankara materials. When questioned on what influences her customer's choice of styles, she responded that previously customers refer to fashion magazine for styles. But that it is no longer in vogue because people now use their phone apps such as Pinetrest, Google to search for trending fabrics and styles. Abulhaman Sadiq the manager of Prince and Princess Fashion Designers, (personal communication, March 13<sup>th</sup>, 2023) also affirmed that costumers make more Ankara attires than lace. The ration of Ankara to lace material that comes to the fashion house according to Sadiq is 3:1. He attributed affordability as one of the factors that contributes to the trending of Ankara fabrics. According to Sadiq lace is often more expensive than Ankara fabric and it is also seen as a luxury cloth.

The owner of Magic Scissor Fashion centre, Amawbia Monica Nwume (personal communication, March 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2023) is of the opinion that the introduction of Ankara fabrics that are made with combination of cotton and synthetic fibres which ensures colour fast and durability has contributed immensely to the popularity of Ankara fabrics. The manager of Dezee Creation Amawbia, Goodness Ekweoba (personal communication 12<sup>th</sup> April, 2023) corroborated this opinion and stated that people patronize more of Ankara fabrics than lace because it is affordable. Ekweoba added that the new brand of Ankara fabric made with blend of cotton and synthetic fibre is more durable and colour fast, making it a good choice for Aso-ebi wears. This has also made it possible for dresses, gowns, jackets, jumpsuits, skirts, and blouses to be fashioned from the fabric. Unlike previously when Ankara fabrics with the exception of hollandaise were regarded as the clothes for the have-nots, Ankara fabrics is currently popular among people of all class. Attires made from Ankara can be worn for any occasion, including weddings, social gatherings, religious events, or casual attire. The collection of customer's clothes on the shelves of the fashion centre visited showed greater number of Ankara materials than lace in all the fashion centres visited see plate 5a, 5b and 6. This affirmed the results obtained from the churches visited that Ankara fabrics are more popular than lace in Awka and Amawbia towns and by extension Anambra state.



Plate 5a: Fabrics shelf at Kirus Fashion, Awka



Plate 5b: Shelf with customer's fabrics at Prince and Princess Fashion Designers Awka. Source: Okeke 2023



Plate 6: Shelve with customers' fabrics at Dezee creation Amawbia. Source: Okeke 2023

On trending styles Goodness Ekweoba (personal communication 12<sup>th</sup> April, 2023) stated that traditional Nigerian blouses often have peplum styled Ankara or lace blouses with short or three-quarter sleeves on a round neckline or off the shoulder. But that in recent time the fashion trend is moving towards the return of puffy, exaggerated Victorian sleeves, which were popularized by the exceedingly fashionable Queen Victoria. Puffed sleeves are used for blouses as well as gowns. It was observed from the data collected that people use Ankara and lace fabrics for making skirt and blouse, but it appears that more people adorn gowns made from Ankara material than skirt and blouse. This according to Ekweoba could be attributed to the hot weather which makes people to opt for wears that will give them more comfort. The researcher also observed that most of the people in the churches visited were adorning gowns made of Ankara fabrics both young and old. Few people also wore gowns made from lace fabrics. On the whole it appears that gown is trending currently in the study area more than skirt and blouse.

### **Conclusion**

Nigerian fashion and styles have evolved over the years and for a modern Nigerian fashion designer, the possibilities with Ankara fabric are endless. In the times past any wax printed cotton fabrics which is not Hollandaise is regarded as "*Abananya*" a word meaning inferior fabrics for the have-nots in the study area. However modern innovation in printing, affordability, coupled with colour fastness of the new Ankara fabric has made it a popular fabric for all class of people. Ankara which is also known as *Abada* in the study area unlike lace that is regarded as a luxury cloth mostly used for special occasion, can be made into dresses, shirts, jackets, trousers, skirts and blouses, jumpsuits, or applied unto a plain material. It is also used in designing fashion accessories like bags, shoes, shoulder strap bags, slippers, and fascinator's clutches, jewelry like necklaces, earrings, and, bracelets, book covers, throw pillows, as well as phone cases, among others.

In addition to being utilized for traditional clothing, Ankara fabric also featured in some English outfit see Plate 1a, 2a, 2b, 2c, 2d and 3a. Different techniques of embellishment such as beading, stoning, frills and embroidery are added to Ankara dress style to give it a fashionable look. Men are not excluded from the new developments involving Ankara fabrics, as accessories like ties, cuff links, pocket squares, and lapels are now created from Ankara that coordinate with the color of their attire. The rising demand in wearing made in Nigerian fashion trends have resulted in more traditional tailors. The majority of people now choose to use these traditional tailors instead of paying expensive prices for international labels for their clothing. Thereby generating employment and enhancing the national economy. The popularity of Ankara fabric is an indication that the reviving of Nigeria textile mills will meet a waiting market.



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