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Harnessing the Economic and Developmental Potentials of Textile Industry for Sustainable Development of South East Region of Nigeria

Ibeto Fabian Onyebuchi
Human Ecology Unit, Department of Agricultural Extension and Rural Development
University of Ibadan
+234 803 553 0835
E-mail: fo.ibeto@ui.edu.ng, fibeto2009@gmail.com
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Abstract:

The study looked at Economic and Developmental Potentials of Textile Industry for Sustainable Development of South East Region, the challenges, markets and other variables. The study employed descriptive qualitative method to arrive at the conclusion. The present decline in oil revenue and the debt burden to the Nigerian economy, it has become imperative for regional efforts towards textile industry for development. Historically, Aba and Onitsha have remained the hubs of garments making and marketing in the Southeast attracting patrons from far and wide, The clothing and textile consumption is very high in the region owing to the high fashionable tendencies of many inhabitants of zone, apart from conventional clothing consumptions; there are other special uses of clothing such as security and military uniforms, political rallies, cultural and end of the year carnivals, sporting activities, environmental remediation, building construction etc. Despite the tremendous economic potentials of the sector, the government policies over the years had negated its growth. The paper believes that with the famed entrepreneurial capability of people of Southeastern Nigeria, textile industry will certainly provide a sustainable development in the region in particular and Nigeria in general if properly harnessed.

Introduction

The textile and clothing industry is the second largest employer after agriculture in the developing world. The industry is labour intensive and offers large employment opportunities, particularly for youth and women, thereby holding considerable potential to motivate and bring forth sustainable development to the South East region of Nigeria.

The southeast geopolitical zone of Nigeria is made up of five states, namely, Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo States with eighty-five Local Government Areas (LGAs) and a population of over twenty million people dwelling in over ten

commercial cities and large towns. Apart from agriculture as the mainstay of economic activities for the majority in the rural communities, the zone is also known for its commerce and trading activities with a preponderance of micro, small and medium indigenous industries that are into manufacturing, fabrication and agro-allied produce. Agriculture thrives very well in the area because the zone is endowed with arable land. The main food crops grown in the zone include yam, cassava, rice, cocoyam and maize while the cash crops include oil-palm, rubber, cocoa, banana and various types of fruits (Civil Resource Development and Documentation Centre). The region as posited by Nwogbaga (2011), is also endowed with mineral resources such as brine, iron ore, lignite, kaolin, clay; petroleum & gas, limestone, marble, salt, lead, zinc, gypsum, granite, Coal etc. despite these resources, the region is lagging behind in sustainable economic development as alluded by Agbo, (2009) which stated that these economic opportunities are not adequately explored by the different states, the resources are either under-exploited or completely left unexploited while state-owned enterprises are depreciating. This situation, according to Agbo, (2009) is partly blamed on the isolated development efforts of the different states in the south east.

In order to develop sustainably, there is need to look towards an industry with a value chain that offers massive employment while utilizing abundant resources and resourcefulness of the people of the south east and no other industry offers this than textile industry. Textile industry is a wide industry that span from agriculture down to sales, use and finally proper disposal of the converted products. The potentials of the industry cannot be over emphasized especially in the South East of Nigeria, a region known for the resilience of her people.

Textile Industry Value Chain and its Potentials in South East Nigeria Sustainable Development

When considering sustainability in supply chains, a lifecycle approach which integrates all aspects of raw materials (cradle), through the stages of production, consumption and disposal (grave) in the value chain is required (Jorgensen, *e tal*, (2008), Allwood, *e tal* 2008). For textile industry, the chain starts with fibre growing or production, to fibre preparations (ginning,

carding, blending etc), spinning into yarn, textile manufacturing, garment manufacturing and retailing. In order to achieve a successful clothing and textiles enterprise, machinery and equipment, designs and other ancillary logistics come into play also. Apparel value chains are made up of five segments, including raw material, yarns and fabrics, garment manufacturers, trade channels and retailers, all differing in location, technology, labour skills and conditions (Gereffi and Appelbaum, 1994). Each segment of value chain of textiles industry presents plethora of investment opportunities that can yield billions of naira in return of investments, for instance, cotton which is the primary raw material of Nigerian textiles industry has a great investment potential to the extent that the federal government has been making efforts to reinvigorate it.

Textile Raw Materials

Raw materials which can be natural or synthetic is the first stage of the clothing and textiles value chain, which includes the following phases: growing of cotton, flax, hemp, jute, ramie, sisal, abaca, coir, silk, wool, alpaca, angora, camel hair, cashmere fibre, mohair fibre, etc which are agricultural produce or industrial production synthetic fibres such as rayon, polyester, spandex, acrylic etc. or mineral fibres such as glass, metals, asbestos etc.

Cotton (*Gossypium* spp) remains by far the most important natural fibre, it ranks first followed by jute, kenaf and sisal in the world production of fibres. It represents (38.5%) of the fibre market and it is considered a strategic commodity because of its standing as a source of rural employment and foreign exchange (Adeniji 2011). In Nigeria, prior to the oil boom, cotton was one of the main source of foreign exchange and second largest employer of labour after the public sector (Gbadegesin and Uyovnisere 1994; Alam et al. 2013). Alam et al. (2013) submitted that in 1993, cotton output was roughly equivalent to the requirement of the textile industry. However, as at 2015, cotton production in Nigeria can only account for (29%) of the requirement of the textile industry whiles the remaining 71% was imported. This was further corroborated by Olatidoye et al. (2017) that cotton production in the country has taken a downward trend as the gap between demand and supply is becoming

wider and wider every year because the supply does not equate demand (Olatidoye, Alimi and Akinola 2018). Institute of Agricultural Research (IAR), (2010) classified the southern cotton growing zone of Nigeria to include the following: Osun, Oyo, Ogun, Ondo, Edo, Kogi and Kwara states. This zone covers a land area of about 170,593 square kilometers representing (19.6%) of the country's land mass and comprises the Savannah/Derived Savannah vegetative zone. However, Aroh (2020) quoted that Alhaji Nnaji, a Zamfara-based multi-sectoral farmer as saying that Nsukka soil is favourable to cotton plantation, more than even what is obtainable in the north. He further stated that he carried out a soil texture analysis, and discovered that Nsukka can become the hub of cotton farming in Nigeria.

Textile Industry Logistic Services

Logistics is almost custom-made art. Integrating information, transportation, inventories, warehousing, materials, packaging, and even the safety of a supply chain is a job of a complexity not seen in any other industry. When it comes to the textile industry, the road for logistics is long. There are many stages between raw materials and finished products, and some more to get the goods to clients in the required terms. Logistics can be inbound, which focuses on purchases made for manufacturing plants and assembly lines or outbound, which relates to the warehousing and related activities of products intended for final users with information flow. These activities no doubt, come with positive economic impacts to the environments where textile industries are domiciled.

Textile Conversion Factories

Up until the revolution of industries, fabrics and clothing were made in the home by individuals for personal use. Sometimes they were also resale on a small scale. The Textile factory was born with the invention of the flying shuttle in 1733, the spinning jenny in 1764, and the power loom in 1784. Then the fabrics and clothing began to be mass-produced. When James Watt's improved steam engine in 1775, Eli Whitney's cotton gin in 1792, and Elias Howe's sewing machine in 1846 all contributed greatly to the success of the textile industry as well according to Sayed (2015). Textile conversion involves spinning mills, weaving mills, knitting mills, dyeing mills and garments factories.

Textile and Machineries Markets

Even at the low ebb of the manufacturing segment of the industry in Nigeria in general and the South East in particular, the marketing and sales segment textile industry is waxing strongly, clothing and textiles markets are located at every nook and crannies of the South East such as Aba, Onitsha, Owerri, Enugu, Umuahia, Abakaliki and other major towns in the region with high turnover and return in investment for the owners and revenues to various tiers of government in forms of taxes. In addition, companies that sell buttons, zippers, knitting supplies, sewing machines and threads, looms, and drapery hardware is also related to this industry.

End Use Textile Products Classifications

It is possible to classify textiles according to too many different main topics. For example; materials, production method etc but in this study classifys textile products according to their end uses. i. Fashion and Ready to Wear Textiles: this includes many textile materials which are used every day such as jeans, t-shirts, skirts, trousers, hats, socks, jackets, shirts and other garments. ii. Home textiles: textiles used in bed linens, table covers, towels, bath robes, pillow covers, decoration, soft furniture, protection against sun, cushion materials, carpeting, blankets, fireproofing, wall and floor coverings, sleeping bags, etc. iii. Geotextiles: These textiles are used in reinforcement of embankments or in constructional work. The application areas include civil engineering, earth and road construction, dam engineering, soil sealing and in drainage systems. iv. Ecological Protection Textiles: New applications for textiles in environmental protection applications – floor sealing, erosion protection, air cleaning, prevention of water pollution, water cleaning, waste treatment/recycling etc. v. Agrotextiles: Sacs for produce, dyestuffs, wrapping and protection textiles, Coffee and tea bags, Nonwoven insert, Knitted net packaging, Silos containers, Canvas covers, Marquee tents, Nets, ropes, lines, Covering, protection, Containment applications, Protective clothes for employees. vi. Medical Textiles: These are commonly used in bandages and sutures (stitching the wounds). Yahya, Khan and Ali (2021) posited that not all the textile fibres can be used here, because their performances depend upon interaction with the cells and different fluids produced by the body.

Sutures and wound dressings use fibers like cotton, silk polyester, polyamide and synthetic fibres of many kinds. Medical applications of textile products include bandages, wound dressings, surgical gowns, drapes, operating theater sutures, stent grafts, repair meshes, tissue engineering scaffolds, wipes, babies' diapers, adult sanitary products, sterilization packs etc. vii. Military, Security and Safety Textiles: Protection against heat and radiation for fire fighter clothing, against molten metals for welders, for bullet proof jackets, camouflage clothing for military operations etc. In bullet proof jackets, special fiber aramid are used which have high tenacity, high thermal resistance and low shrinkage. viii. Transport Textiles: These textiles are used in the manufacture of automobiles and aircraft. The products include; tyre, belt, hose reinforcement, safety belts, air bags, composite reinforcements, automotive bodies, civil and military aircraft, bodies, wings, engine components, many other uses. ix. Building Construction Textiles: Textiles used in concrete reinforcement, façade foundation systems, interior construction, insulations, proofing materials, air conditioning, noise prevention, visual protection, protection against the sun, building safety. Examples of such construction are found in football stadia, airports, emergency centres, hotels etc. x. Sports Textiles: Sports textile is one of the branches of technical textiles. Nowadays sophisticated technologies are used in technical textile to produce sportswear for many kinds of sporting activities.

Employment Opportunities in Textile Industry

Adegboyega and Izuaka (2023) stated that KPMG estimate shows that national unemployment rate has increased to 37.7percent in 2022 and will rise further to 40.6 percent in 2023 though National Bureau of statistics puts it at 33.3%. The South East with 29.1% has the second unemployment rate in the country. Textile industry being a high employment sector can reserve this trend as it has done in other economies such as United States of America, Europe and Asian countries.

Challenges Militating Against South East Nigeria Sustainable Development

Since abolishment of regional governance in Nigeria, the states so created, especially those in South East have been working in silos. This has given for insufficient/Poor Power, infrastructural inadequacy, inadequate developmental

finance, lack of Adequate Raw Materials, over taxation and other myriad problems that have negated the economic development of the region.

The Role of Textile in The Economic Development of Other Countries

China according to Fibre2Fashion (2013) earns considerable revenue with the help of its textile industry. This industry is one of the major factors accelerating its growth. Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu Limited (a reputed accounting firm) and US Council on Competitiveness rated China as the most competitive manufacturing market of the world. Very few countries can match up to the level of China in the global textile industry. India is an almost equally competitive market when it comes to textiles. The country has a well-developed textile industry (Fibre2Fashion, 2013).. Textile industry has a huge role to play in the overall economic growth of the country. It attracts immense foreign investment on yearly basis. In Bangladesh, Rahman (2011) posited that textiles have been an extremely important part of Bangladesh's economy. It was also stated that textile industry accounts for 45% of all industrial employment in the country.

Conclusion

Though, Nigeria's federal government through its monetary interventions towards the revival of clothing and textiles industry has failed due policy inconsistencies, poor industry's infrastructural and logistic inputs, mindless smuggling of textile products with tacit connivance of the Nigeria Customs Service and other operational challenges, South East region can still look at textile industry collectively. The region can explore the vast potentials inherent in the textile industry to sustainably develop. In the field of industrialization, the role of textile industry is found very prominent in both developed and developing countries. This has been exploited the USA, Europe, China and other Asian countries therefore, the industry could help develop to the region, all things being equal. With the population of 22 million, the can do spirits of the inhabitants of the region, high propensity for fashion and fashion related products and declining appeal of fossil fuel especially by the western economies, with the projected attendant reduction of revenue from oil and gas, the study strongly believes that textile industry being a labour intensive sector across its value chain will help the

sustainable development quest of the region if adequate infrastructures and policies are put in place, it is also believed that a thriving clothing and textile industry will certainly have positive impacts on agriculture through backward integration.

Recommendations

1. In order to keep up with the population growth of the region and stem the growing insecurity, it has become expedient that the regional governments work together to redevelop the textile industry in the region. Therefore clothing and textile industry should be supported by all and sundry to lead the way of industralisation.
2. Regional policy road map should be developed to enhance textile industry by maintaining a sustainable friendly investment environment.
3. In order to actually stimulate the clothing and textiles industry, transportation, power and other necessary infrastructures for investors' friendly environment should be put in place.
4. Institutions of higher learning and skill acquisition centres should establish and more departments of textiles and textiles related studies in order to train adequate manpower for the industry.
5. Centres of excellence in textile industry production should be established across the region through industry cluster to improve synergy.

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