

Clothing Purchasing, Consumption, and Maintenance Behaviours of Homemakers in Enugu State

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Abstract

This study examined the clothing purchasing and maintenance behaviors as well as the factors influencing clothing consumption among homemakers in Enugu State, Nigeria. Three objectives guided the study. A descriptive survey research design was employed and the study was conducted in Enugu State. The study sample comprised 390 out of 725,766 female homemakers aged 25 and above, selected through a multistage sampling technique. Data was collected using a structured questionnaire, validated by experts, and piloted for reliability (Cronbach's Alpha = 0.89). Data was analysed using mean and standard deviation using SPSS version 22. Findings revealed that homemakers' clothing purchases are influenced significantly by sociocultural, religious, and personal factors. They prioritize decency (3.28), quality (3.23), and affordability, while also responding to fashion trends and digital media influence. Budget-conscious behaviors such as list-making and multi-channel retail engagement both online and offline were common. Furthermore, clothing maintenance practices indicated a high level of textile care literacy. Respondents reported routine activities such as stain removal (3.24), use of appropriate detergents (3.18), ironing (3.14), mending (3.23), and dry cleaning (3.23). These practices reflect sustainable consumption patterns and resource-conscious behaviors, underpinned by traditional knowledge and increasing modern awareness. The study concludes that homemakers in Enugu State exhibit a complex mix of traditional and contemporary clothing practices, shaped by evolving consumption values and resource management. Recommendations include targeted workshops on sustainable garment care, promotion of culturally sensitive clothing production, inclusion of fashion literacy in adult education, and community campaigns on textile.

Key words: Fashion, Purchasing, Clothing, Consumption and Homemakers.

Introduction

Clothing, as an essential aspect of human existence, represents much more than mere protection from environmental elements. It is an integral part of cultural, social, and economic life. Esiowu and Igbo (2011) explained that clothing is anything one uses to express and validate oneself, especially when communicating thoughts, values, attitudes, or feelings to others and receiving a response from them, either verbally or non-verbally. It includes clothes and all other accessories that people put on for protection, adornment, identification, modesty, and status, among other purposes. Clothing serves as a nonverbal means of communication that people understand. Clothing choices vary across different cultural, social, and economic contexts, but they are primarily driven by the different basic human needs for protection, identity, and social expression. According to Yin Liu, & Zhang, (2021), clothing is not only a functional necessity but also a form of identity, social status, and cultural expression. Moloney (2016) posited that clothing should be obtained to suit the personality and the figure type. Anyakoha (2015) further suggested that while making a choice of clothes, people should consider their age, sex, body complexion, dress colour, time of activities, and status.

A study by Etuk et al. (2022) highlighted that cultural influences significantly impact clothing choices, often overshadowing practical considerations such as fabric quality and maintenance needs. Similarly, Yogita and Dube (2024) found that societal norms and economic factors

heavily influence clothing purchase decisions, with income levels affecting the ability to prioritize quality over cost. Homemakers are primarily influenced by the availability of clothing in local markets and stores, which often provide seasonal sales, promotional deals, and discounts that shape purchasing decisions. However, clothing choices should focus on durable, multipurpose clothing that can withstand wear and tear, particularly in the context of Nigeria's volatile economy (Chijioke & Okwor, 2023).

Clothing purchasing behaviours are influenced by multiple factors, including individual preferences, societal trends, marketing strategies, and financial capabilities. According to Alhassan (2022), economic pressures, such as inflation and rising costs of living impact the clothing purchasing behaviours of homemakers. Alhasan (2022) further stated that one of the key drivers of clothing purchases among homemakers is the perceived need to maintain social status and personal image, which is often linked to cultural and societal expectations. For some homemakers, the priority is often placed on affordable clothing that meets the basic functional needs of the household, with additional consideration given to clothing that aligns with cultural or social expectations.

Homemakers are primarily responsible for managing household activities, particularly in purchasing and managing family clothing for both their spouses and children (Anyakoha, 2015). Homemakers looking to maximize their spending often buy in bulk or during sales periods (Okafor,

2021). The rise of online shopping and digital marketing has also changed purchasing behaviors, leading homemakers to increasingly favour e-commerce platforms for more convenient and diverse options. Buying family clothing can be planned or impulsive. Proper planning based on the resources available and the clothing needs of family members can enhance clothing consumption. Obi (2016) stated that proper clothing consumption skills help to meet family needs and tastes. However, some homemakers, particularly those in rural areas, seem to struggle with clothing selection, use, and maintenance due to poor infrastructure (Nathan 2015). Furthermore, some homemakers often base their consumption on what they observe others wearing or what they see in the media. The main disadvantage of this is that those clothing items may not suit the needs of the family and may be made of inferior materials that are not durable. Homemakers, therefore, need proper planning in clothing purchases and consumption to avoid wasting the family's scarce resources (Killick, 2018). A well-planned purchase and consumption of clothing should respond to the basic needs of the family and bring a better quality of life while minimizing cost and waste. Consumption of clothing should be appropriately planned and proper planning entails proper selection and maintenance (Dankoski, 2015). Homemakers are required to identify and select fabrics that are appropriate for family use. Similarly, they should be knowledgeable and apply their knowledge of the properties of fabrics to select, use, and maintain the clothing.

Besides purchasing skills, understanding proper clothing maintenance techniques is essential for wise clothing consumption. Clothing maintenance is a preventive measure given to a clothing item to elongate its life span (Storm 2019). Clothing maintenance also involves repairing torn or worn items to restore them to their former state or give them another appearance. Lack of proper maintenance could cause the item to be damaged beyond repair, leading to its being discarded or disposed of. According to Marshal, (2014) clothing maintenance activities include proper laundry, mending, drying, and storage. Proper care of clothing items helps to keep them in good condition, and this will improve the appearance of the wearer. Given the current economic situation in Nigeria which necessitates more frugal management of family resources, it is not clear how homemakers are navigating the clothing consumption of their families. Nkrumah (2020) emphasized that inadequate clothing care practices, such as improper washing and storage, contribute to the rapid deterioration of garments, raising the frequency of replacements and associated costs and consequent wastage of families' scarce resources. Hence, the study seeks to investigate the clothing purchasing, consumption, and maintenance behaviors of Homemakers in Enugu State.

Objectives of the Study: Specifically, the study sought to;

1. determine the clothing purchasing behaviours of Homemakers in Enugu State;

2. identify the factors influencing clothing consumption by the respondents and
3. identify the clothing maintenance behaviours adopted by the respondents.

Methodology

Design of the Study: The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. Nworgu (2015) stated that survey research design aimed at collecting data on and describing in a systematic manner the characteristics (such as attitude, activities, motivations and opinions), features or facts about a given population. It is interested in describing certain variables in relation to the population and stating the events the way they are. The survey design was therefore considered suitable for this study because the researcher sought to ascertain the opinions of the population on the clothing purchasing, consumption, and maintenance behaviors of Homemakers in Enugu State.

Population for the Study: The population for this study was 725,766 adult females from three senatorial zones in Enugu State (National Bureau of Statistics, 2009). The adult female population was sampled due to lack of data for the population of homemakers.

Sample and Sampling Technique: The sample size was determined in three stages. The first stage involved calculating the sample size using Taro Yammene formula as follows;

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where;

n = Sample size

N = Population size (i.e. 725766)
 e = Sampling error estimation (i.e. 5%)
 1 = Constant value

This calculation yielded a sample size of 390 homemakers. The second stage involved the random selection of three local government areas, one from each of the three senatorial zones in Enugu State. The selected local governments include Nsukka for the Enugu North senatorial zone, Enugu North for the Enugu East senatorial zone, and Udi for the Enugu West senatorial zone. These local governments were chosen to represent each zone. In the final stage, the sample size was evenly distributed among the three selected local government areas, resulting in 130 respondents from each area. The selection criteria specified homemakers with a maximum of five children and 15 years of marriage. This is because homemakers who have been married for about 15 years are expected to possess extensive knowledge about household budgeting, consumption priorities, and long-term clothing maintenance practices, particularly as they relate to growing children.

Instrument for Data Collection: A structured questionnaire was used in collecting data from the respondents. The questionnaire was divided into two parts: A and B. Part A elicited personal data of the respondents while Part B is divided into three sections. Section A contained items on the clothing purchasing behaviour of homemakers in Enugu State. Section B obtained data on the factors influencing the clothing consumption of homemakers in Enugu

State and section C elicited data on the clothing maintenance behaviours adopted by Homemakers in Enugu State. This was structured on four response options; strongly agree (SA), agree (A), disagree (D), and strongly disagree (SD). The response options were rated as 4, 3, 2 and 1 respectively.

Validation and Reliability of the Instrument: The instrument was subjected to face validation by three experts, two from Home Economics and Hospitality Management Education and one from measurement and evaluation unit of Science Education Department, all from the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. The comments of the validators were used to produce the final copy. The instrument was also pilot-tested on 20 homemakers from Aguata local government areas of Anambra state. The pilot-tested instrument was subjected to Cronbach Alpha method to determine the internal consistency which yielded a coefficient of 0.89. This data obtained was considered reliable.

Method of Data Collection

Data was collected by the researchers with the help of two research assistants. The research assistants were briefed on the methods of instrument administration. Three hundred and ninety copies of questionnaires were hand-distributed to the respondents, and an on-the-spot collection was made. All copies administered were retrieved, showing a 100% return rate. The duration of the process was four weeks

Method of Data Analysis

Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 22 was used for data analysis. The data collected were analyzed using mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions. Since the items were based on a 4-point scale, the acceptable mean score was 2.50. Thus, mean ratings of 2.50 and above were considered as agreed, while items with mean rating below 2.50 were considered as disagreed.

Results

Demographic characteristics of the respondents

The respondents were parents with 3-5 children, aged 55 years and above. Most of them had at least a secondary school education, and a few attained tertiary education. Their average monthly household income was sixty thousand naira (₦60,000).

Clothing Purchasing Behaviour of the Respondents

The mean ratings for clothing purchasing behaviour of homemakers in Enugu State presented in Table 1 show that out of 12 items 11 items were above the cut-off mean score (2.50). Most of the respondents agreed that they purchase clothing items based on what their religion approves of (\bar{x} = 3.35), buying clothing items that is decent (\bar{x} = 3.28), writing shopping lists before purchasing any clothing item (\bar{x} = 3.29), and buying clothing items based on social media advertisement (\bar{x} = 3.39). The standard deviation ranges from 0.73 – 0.82, indicating that the respondents were not far from each other in their opinions.

Table 1: Mean Ratings of Clothing Purchasing Behaviour of the Respondents

Clothing purchasing behaviour	X	SD	Remarks
Purchasing clothing items my religion approves of	3.35	.82	Agreed
Buying clothing items that is decent	3.28	.75	Agreed
Buying high quality clothing items	3.23	.81	Agreed
Purchasing clothing items that are trending	3.22	.81	Agreed
Purchasing clothing items that draws my attention	3.15	.81	Agreed
Writing shopping list before purchasing any clothing item	3.28	.75	Agreed
Buying clothing items online	3.20	.73	Agreed
Buying clothing items at physical stores	3.20	.73	Agreed
Buying clothing items based on culture	3.23	.81	Disagreed
Buying clothing items only on festive period	2.24	.54	Agreed
Buying clothing item based on social media advertisement	3.29	.76	Agreed
Buying clothing items that are trending	3.27	.74	Agreed
GRAND MEAN	3.15	.49	Agreed

Key: X= Mean, SD= Standard Deviation

The mean ratings of clothing consumption factors of respondents presented in Table 2 show that all the 10 items were above 2.50. The respondents agreed that factors that influence their clothing consumption include religion/belief of the family ($\bar{x} = 3.15$),

culture ($\bar{x} = 3.22$), the properties and characteristics of fibre components ($\bar{x} = 3.23$), and peer pressure ($\bar{x} = 3.20$) among other factors. The standard deviation ranges from 0.73 – 0.86 indicating that the respondents did not differ much in their opinions.

Table 2: Mean Ratings of Factors Influencing Clothing Consumption of the Respondents

Consumption Factors	X	SD	Remarks
Religion/belief of the family influences clothing use	3.15	0.81	Agreed
Culture influence contributes to the clothing use	3.22	0.84	Agreed
Societal influence contributes to the clothing use	3.17	0.86	Agreed
Weather condition where the family is dwelling influences the clothing use	3.20	0.79	Agreed
The properties and characteristics of fiber components influence the clothing use	3.23	0.81	Agreed
Influence of care and maintenance associated with the textile clothing the use	3.22	0.81	Agreed
Peer pressure influences the clothing use	3.20	0.73	Agreed
Media influences on fashion contribute to the clothing use	3.28	0.75	Agreed
Occupational status of the parents influences the clothing use	3.22	0.81	Agreed
Colour/style of the clothing item influences the use	3.35	0.82	Agreed
GRAND MEAN	3.15	.49	A

Key: X= Mean, SD= Standard Deviation

The findings presented in Table 3 provide data on the clothing maintenance behaviours adopted by respondents. Out of 17 behaviour items, 14 were rated above the threshold mean. The clothing maintenance behaviours include removing any stain on clothing items before laundry (\bar{x} = 3.24), using suitable washing agents (\bar{x} = 3.18), following the recommended water temperature for laundry (\bar{x} =

3.24), renovating old clothing (\bar{x} = 3.21), mending of torn clothes before laundry (\bar{x} = 3.23), patching/darning minor damages (\bar{x} = 3.23), daily care (\bar{x} = 3.14), proper storage (\bar{x} = 3.19), and following care labels (\bar{x} = 3.18). The standard deviation ranges from 0.64 – 0.85 indicating that the respondents did not vary much from each other in their opinions.

Table 3: Mean Ratings of the Respondents on the Clothing Maintenance Behaviour Adopted by the respondents

Clothing maintenance behaviour and consumption	X	SD	Remarks
Removing any stain on clothing items before laundry.	3.24	.83	Agreed
Using suitable washing Agents.	3.18	.74	Agreed
Using the recommended temperature of water in laundry.	3.24	.83	Agreed
Renovation of old clothing	3.21	.81	Agreed
Mending of any torn clothes before laundry	3.23	.82	Agreed
Patching/darning of clothing items with minor damages.	3.23	.82	Agreed
Daily care of the clothing.	3.14	.79	Agreed
Proper storage of the clothing after use	3.50	.85	Agreed
Following the instruction given on care labels	2.24	.64	Disagreed
Routine care of the clothing.	3.23	.82	Agreed
Dry cleaning approach on the clothing.	3.23	.82	Agreed
Ironing/steaming of clothing items after laundry	3.14	.79	Agreed
Monthly care of the clothing	3.19	.80	Agreed
Preventing long exposure of clothing items to sunlight	3.18	.74	Agreed
Waiting until the clothing item visibly appears dirty or smells	3.22	.81	Agreed
Prefer washing machine over hand washing due to convenience and time	3.29	.84	Agreed
Rotating wardrobe position with changing seasons to avoid mildew	2.24	.64	Disagreed
Airing clothing items from time to time to avoid attack of moth	2.26	.65	Disagreed
Using of camphor on stored clothing items to prevent mildew attack	2.28	.66	Disagreed
Grand Mean	3.22	.74	Agreed

Key: X= Mean, SD= Standard Deviation, A= Agreed

Discussion of Findings

The findings on the clothing purchasing behaviours of the respondents reveal that sociocultural, religious, and personal factors significantly shape the

clothing purchasing behaviour of the respondents. Religious and cultural values were found to be central to clothing choices, as homemakers prioritize clothing items their religion approves of and those aligned with

cultural norms. This supports the assertions of Owuamanam and Osarenren (2020) and Okoro and Nwosu (2019), who emphasized the influence of religious orientation and cultural expectations on consumer dress patterns in Nigeria. The preference for decent and high-quality clothing indicates a concern for modesty, durability, and value for money, echoing the findings of Nwafor and Nwakoby (2021) and Iwu and Igbinedion (2018). This practical and economically rational behaviour reflects homemakers' dual role as cultural custodians and household financial managers.

Moreover, despite these traditional influences, the findings show that homemakers are also responsive to contemporary fashion trends and modern retail practices. The inclination to purchase trending clothing items and those that draw attention points to a growing interest in personal aesthetics and fashion awareness, likely influenced by digital media exposure, as noted by Ayodele and Adebayo (2020). Budget-conscious behaviours such as preparing shopping lists, combined with multi-channel retail engagement through both physical stores and online platforms, indicate adaptive shopping strategies aligned with findings by Okeke and Uduji (2019) and Ayodele et al. (2020). Social media advertising also plays a notable role in shaping clothing preferences, reinforcing Onuoha and Onyeka's (2021) view of social platforms as powerful consumer influence tools. Finally, the limited emphasis on purchasing only during festive periods suggests a shift toward more regular,

need-driven clothing consumption, marking a departure from earlier seasonal purchasing patterns observed by Ezenwaka and Okoye (2017).

The findings on factors influencing the clothing consumption patterns of the respondents demonstrate that clothing consumption patterns of the homemakers are shaped by a combination of religious, cultural, social, environmental, aesthetic, and practical factors. The findings show that clothing choices are deeply embedded in sociocultural and religious contexts. This aligns with the conclusions of Owuamanam and Osarenren (2020), who noted that religion plays a prescriptive role in dictating appropriate clothing, especially in conservative communities. Similarly, Okoro and Nwosu (2019) emphasized how cultural norms influence dress codes, not only for aesthetic preferences but also for community identity and moral expectations. Weather conditions and the characteristics of the fabric were also reported as important determinants. These suggest that homemakers in Enugu State consider functionality and comfort, especially given the region's tropical climate. According to Akinsola et al. (2021), climatic conditions in southern Nigeria necessitate clothing choices that promote breathability and ease of movement, reflecting a utilitarian approach to clothing consumption.

Moreover, the influence of care and maintenance requirements indicates that homemakers evaluate the long-term usability and maintenance costs of textile items. This is consistent with Iwu and Igbinedion (2018), who found that Nigerian consumers increasingly

prioritize ease of care and fabric durability due to the rising cost of living and limited access to constant utilities such as electricity and water needed for laundry. Peer pressure and media influence emerged as notable factors, underscoring the role of social networks and mass communication in shaping clothing trends. These findings align with Ezenwafor and Onokala (2020), who observed that younger homemakers, in particular, are susceptible to media-propagated fashion trends that redefine traditional styles. Media outlets and online platforms increasingly shape fashion preferences, serving as sources of inspiration and validation. The colour of textiles highlights aesthetic preferences as a primary consideration. Colour preference often intersects with cultural symbolism and personal taste, supporting Nwafor and Nwakoby's (2021) finding that consumers are increasingly conscious of the emotional and visual appeal of their clothing. Additionally, the occupational status of family heads reinforces that financial capacity and social status shape the quality and quantity of clothing purchased, as indicated by Kolawale (2019) in their study on household consumption in southeastern Nigeria.

The findings on the clothing maintenance behaviour adopted by the respondents reveal a wide range of clothing maintenance behaviours and consumption patterns among homemakers in Enugu State, reflecting both practical knowledge and resource-conscious practices. Homemakers routinely engage in stain removal before washing, use appropriate detergents, and select suitable water

temperatures, indicating a sound understanding of fabric care. These behaviours align with (Olamide & Chukwuma, 2020; Ahmed & Hassan, 2019; Alabi & Ogunyemi, 2021), emphasizing the importance of fabric-appropriate care to prolong garment life and preserve quality. (Ogbonna & Nwankwo, 2020; Edeh & Chika, 2019; Uche & Bello, 2021) noted that renovating old clothing, mending garments, and patching minor damage demonstrate economic prudence and sustainable consumption strategies common in lower-middle-income households. Daily garment care such as dusting, brushing, and airing, along with proper storage and adherence to care labels, highlight homemakers' structured approach to preserving clothing quality and extending usage (Nnaji, 2020; Olayemi & Musa, 2018; Onyeka & Ebere, 2019). Akintayo, (2021) agreed that routine clothing maintenance further reinforces their commitment to domestic responsibilities and professional presentation.

The use of dry-cleaning services, ironing, and steaming suggests a dual focus on hygiene and aesthetics, especially shows it formal or high-value clothing, (Udeh & Okafor, 2018; Chibundu & Emeka, 2017). Monthly care routines, avoidance of excessive sun exposure, and decisions around laundry timing indicate strategic planning in garment upkeep by (Okonkwo & Nwankwo, 2020; Eze & Chukwu, 2019). Notably, homemakers wait until clothes are visibly dirty before washing, a behaviour possibly tied to hygiene awareness and resource availability, differing from trends in

water-scarce regions. While preference for handwashing persists due to cost and power issues, the rotation of wardrobe items to prevent mildew is less common, though airing practices and use of camphor remain widespread for pest control. Collectively, these findings by (Aluko & Ogundele, 2021; Ezeobi & Nwankwo, 2019; Odu & Ejim, 2020) point to a blend of traditional knowledge, adaptive practices, and emerging literacy in clothing care among homemakers in Enugu State.

Conclusion

The study reveals that clothing purchasing and maintenance behaviours among homemakers in Enugu State are shaped by a dynamic interplay of sociocultural, religious, economic, and modern influences. While religious and cultural values continue to guide clothing choices toward modesty and decency, there is also a growing responsiveness to fashion trends, digital marketing, and multichannel retail strategies. Homemakers exhibit prudent consumption behaviours such as planning purchases and engaging in sustainable clothing maintenance practices, including mending, dry cleaning, and adhering to fabric care standards. These behaviours reflect both a strong sense of household management and an evolving awareness of personal aesthetics and garment longevity.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made:

1. Government and non-governmental organizations should organize targeted clothing care and budgeting workshops to enhance homemakers' skills in sustainable garment use and smart purchasing decisions.
2. Policymakers should encourage the production and marketing of culturally appropriate, high-quality clothing to support local industries while meeting homemakers' preferences for modest and durable garments.
3. Educational institutions and community centers should incorporate fashion literacy and digital retail navigation into adult learning programs to help homemakers better understand market trends and online shopping tools.
4. Media campaigns and local influencers should promote sustainable behaviours such as clothing renovation, stain pre-treatment, and appropriate laundry practices to reduce textile waste and preserve household resources.

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