

## **Students' Acceptance of Local Fabric (Aso-Oke) as Graduation Gowns for Cultural Heritage Development in Nigeria**

**Joseph Babatunde Ajayi**

**Department of Design and Fine Arts**

**Bamidele Olumilua University of Education, Science and Technology, Ikere-Ekiti, Nigeria.**

**Contact: [ajayi.joseph@bouesti.edu.ng](mailto:ajayi.joseph@bouesti.edu.ng)**

### **Abstract**

**Background:** Aso-oke, a renowned local fabric of the Yoruba people of Southwestern Nigeria, is a traditional handwoven strip produced from cotton and local silk. Its age-long popularity and use have transcended many generations and survived many competitive challenges.

**Objective:** This study aimed to examine students' acceptance of local fabric, Aso-oke, for use as graduation gowns in universities.

**Methodology:** The design of this study was a descriptive survey. The study used an online questionnaire directed at three hundred and eighty-four university students in both public and private universities to give room for comparison. Data were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics, while results were presented in tables and charts.

**Results:** Findings revealed that most students agreed to accept Aso-oke as a graduation gown in their schools. Most students also agreed on the willingness to recommend using Aso-oke as a graduation gown in their schools. Furthermore, the hypothesis shows a significant relationship between the perceptions of Aso-oke as graduation gowns and their acceptance as graduation gowns ( $P < 0.05$ ).

**Conclusion:** This study concludes that the willingness of the students to accept Aso-oke as a graduation gown points to its potential as a viable option for cultural preservation and local economic growth.

**Unique contribution:** This study has contributed to the body of knowledge in the textile industry by revealing students' perception of localised fabric and their acceptance of these local fabrics for occasions, thereby indicating that investing in the nation's textile industry in the aspect of local fabrics such as Aso-oke will improve the standard of living of local people.

**Key Recommendation:** Both public and private universities in the Southwest should use Aso-oke as their graduation gown. This will improve the standard of living and promote the image of Yoruba culture through traditional dress.

**Keywords:** Local fabric, perception, acceptance, willingness, textile, students

### **Introduction**

Historically, the Nigerian textile sector was pivotal as the country's second-largest employer, trailing only the government. It consistently wielded considerable influence within the manufacturing domain of the economy, offering employment opportunities to a workforce surpassing one million individuals. This industry also established a robust market, encompassing 250,000 tons of raw cotton procured from local growers (Aremu, 2005). Moreover, it contributed substantially to the Nigerian federal government's revenue, exceeding one billion naira. Additionally, the textile industry demonstrated its reliance on indigenous resources, notably

consuming substantial quantities of local raw materials such as cotton and polyester (Owen et al., 2016). The Nigerian textile industry's inability to compete is primarily the result of its inability to create goods at cheaper costs. In addition to political inaction, several local and international policy initiatives have played a role in the state of affairs in the textile industry today. The industry's demise has been attributed to neoliberal reforms, shifting trade agreements, a lack of suitable infrastructure for supplying energy and water, decreased cotton production, and increased textile imports (Muhammad et al., 2018).

It is accurate to say that change has been the sole constant throughout human history. More significant is the fact that change never occurs in a vacuum and frequently interacts with earlier phenomena to create new categories with distinct elements that unmistakably imply continuity (Olutayo et al., 2011). Traditions and cultural practices, just as traditional clothing, develop and evolve over time. In this process, the ideals of a specific culture or community may be validated through the traditional dress styles (Disele et al., 2011). Culture is an essential aspect of any society. It serves to protect their identity and expresses their way of life. It can be expressed in different ways like communication, dressing, eating, greetings, and marriage, among others. When Aso-oke is considered, this is especially the case (Olutayo et al., 2011). Nigerians have been weaving Aso-oke for a very long time because different ethnic groups value their indigenous fabrics. More notably, the Yoruba tribe of Southwestern Nigeria places a great deal of importance on Aso-oke. This is seen by how it is used in sociocultural events (Diyaolu, 2010). Other ethnic groups, both inside and outside the nation, have embraced it, demonstrating its popularity and widespread use. It serves as a type of identity that unites Yoruba generations. The weaving of Aso-oke employs both men and women in Yoruba communities in addition to its cultural imports, making it a significant and genuine venture for national development (Diyaolu & Omotosho, 2020).

Aso-oke (otherwise known as Aso-ofi) is a broad name for items woven on a horizontal loom as well as clothing created from it (Ademuleya, 2014). The origin of the name Aso-oke can be traced to the late 19<sup>th</sup> century when Lagos merchants called residents of the Iseyin region by the name Ara-Oke (i.e. people from Oke Ogun or Yoruba hinterland). People in Lagos referred to the cloth as *Aso awon ara oke* when it was brought to Lagos for sale from Iseyin. Its name "*aso-ofi*", refers to the method of production, notably the loom. The word for cloth in Yoruba is *aso*, and the word for the loom used to weave this kind of garment is *ofi* (Diyaolu & Omotosho, 2020).

Due to the competition from materials with intricate embroidery, such as lace, demand for conventional woven fabrics has plummeted. Aso-oke has regressed because of low profit margins brought on by poor demand and production quality. The high cost of raw materials and restrictions on traditional and modern usage and modernisation hampers the production of Aso-oke. Due to the widespread acceptance of materials relative to native fabrics, weaving activity and aso-oke consumption have decreased over time. These changes may have been required by acculturation and the influx of Western clothing. Only chieftaincy, festivals, engagements, and some significant events may be used (Diyaolu & Omotosho, 2020). Although researchers like Muhammad et al. (2018), Owen et al. (2016), Disele et al. (2011), and Ademuleya (2014) have examined issues related to the textile industry, there is a dearth of information on students' acceptance of Aso-oke as ceremonial wears such as graduation gown.

## Objective of the Study

This study aimed to examine students' acceptance of local fabric (Aso-oke) as graduation gowns for cultural heritage development in Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. examine the students' perception of Aso-oke as a graduation gown.
2. find out students' willingness to recommend using Aso-Oke as a graduation gown.
3. investigate the willingness of students to accept the use of Aso-oke as a graduation gown.
4. find out the willingness of students to pay for Aso-oke as a graduation gown.

## Hypotheses

1. There is no significant difference in perception and acceptance of Aso-Oke as a graduation gown between students in public and private universities.
2. There is no relationship between perception and acceptance of Aso-oke as a graduation gown among students.
3. There is no relationship between socio-demographic characteristics and perception of Aso-oke as a graduation gown.

## Methodology

This study was carried out in the Southwestern region of Nigeria, comprising both public and private universities in the region, to give a comparative approach to the study. This study made use of an online survey method for data collection. A structured questionnaire was developed based on a comprehensive literature review, and the questionnaire constructs focused on gathering information such as the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents, their perception of Aso-oke as a graduation gown as well as their willingness to accept the use of Aso-oke as graduation gown. Three experts in art entrepreneurship determined the instrument's validity and reliability of the instrument through a pilot study of 20 respondents who were not part of the actual sample study. The Cronbach's Alpha method was used to test the reliability, and the coefficient obtained was 0.79, which indicates that the instrument is reliable for collecting data for the study. The target population of the study were university students from both public and private universities. The study targeted four hundred respondents, while three hundred and eighty-four copies of the questionnaire were filled out by the students from the total number of students in Southwest Nigeria with simple random sampling techniques. The questionnaire was distributed via social media platforms, and the responses were received and collated via Microsoft Excel. Online survey allowed for easy collation of responses. Data obtained in this study was analysed through the use of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS 23). The result was presented descriptively and inferentially. Descriptive statistics involves using charts, tables, percentages, means, and standard deviations. Inferential statistics involved the use of t-tests, correlation, and Chi-Square.

## Results

The return rate of the questionnaire was 96%, which was considered sufficient for analysis. Table 1 reveals the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents. Most respondents were females (51.5%) between 26-35 years of age (47.7%). Also, the highest percentage of the respondents were single (78.9%) and had a Christian religion (97.1%). Furthermore, the highest percentage of the respondents had a low income of below 50,000 (67.2%) and were all Nigerians.

**Table 1: Socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents**

Variables	Frequency (N=384)	Percentage (%)
<b>Gender</b>		
Female	194	50.5
Male	190	49.5
<b>Age</b>		
Less than 18 years	5	1.3
18-25 years	160	41.7
26-35 years	183	47.7
35-45 years	24	6.3
Above 45 years	12	3.1
<b>Marital status</b>		
Single	303	78.9
Married	81	21.1
<b>Religion</b>		
Christianity	373	97.1
Muslim	11	2.9
<b>Monthly income</b>		
Below 50,000	258	67.2
50,000-100,000	28	7.3
101,000- 150,000	34	8.9
Above 150,000	64	16.7
<b>Nationality</b>		
Nigerian	384	100

Source: Author's Computation 2022

Table 2 reveals the perception of Aso-oke as a graduation gown among the students. The statements were measured according to their means. The mean score ranged from 4.09 to 3.15. "The use of Aso-oke fabrics will promote the cultural heritage of the local community" had the highest mean value of 4.09, followed by "The graduation gown produced from the Aso-oke can serve as a source of income for the local community" with a mean value of 4.01. However, "Aso-oke fabrics as graduation gowns would be less expensive to produce and purchase" had the lowest mean value of 3.15.

**Table 2: Perception of Aso-oke as a graduation gown**

Statement	SA	A	N	D	SD	Mean	St. D
Aso-oke fabrics as graduation gowns would be less expensive to produce and purchase	59 (15.4%)	103 (26.8%)	99 (25.8%)	83 (21.6%)	40 (10.4%)	3.15	1.223
Aso-oke fabrics as graduation gowns would be attractive to wear	81 (21.1%)	155 (40.4%)	81 (21.1%)	32 (8.3%)	35 (9.1%)	3.56	1.177
Aso-oke fabrics are well designed more than the plain graduation gowns	115 (29.9%)	134 (34.9%)	62 (16.1%)	44 (11.5%)	29 (7.6%)	3.68	1.226
Aso-oke fabrics are good substitute for graduation gown	65 (16.9%)	123 (32%)	117 (30.5%)	39 (10.2%)	40 (10.4%)	3.35	1.182
Aso-oke fabrics are of unique qualities	119 (31%)	158 (41.1%)	67 (17.4%)	22 (5.7%)	18 (4.7%)	3.88	1.060

The use of Aso-oke fabrics will promote cultural heritage of the local community	176 (45.8%)	127 (33.1%)	45 (11.7%)	12 (3.1%)	24 (6.3%)	4.09	1.122
The graduation gown produced from the Aso-oke can serve as source of income for the local community	148 (38.5%)	149 (38.8%)	46 (12%)	23 (6%)	18 (4.7%)	4.01	1.082
I can confidently publicize the patronage of the gown among other students	82 (21.4%)	146 (38%)	92 (24%)	35 (9.1%)	29 (7.6%)	3.57	1.145
I cannot be ashamed wearing the graduation gown made from Aso-oke fabric	81 (21.1%)	129 (33.6%)	127 (33.1%)	12 (3.1%)	35 (9.1%)	3.54	1.133
Using Aso-oke fabrics would improve the image of my school	67 (17.4%)	109 (28.4%)	122 (31.8%)	51 (13.3%)	35 (9.1%)	3.32	1.176

Source: Author's Computation 2022

Figure 1 reveals the willingness of the students to recommend the use of Aso-oke as a graduation gown. The highest percentage of the respondents agreed they would recommend Aso-oke as a graduation gown (32.8%), 15.1% strongly agreed, 28.4% were neutral, 13.3% disagreed, and 10.4% strongly disagreed.

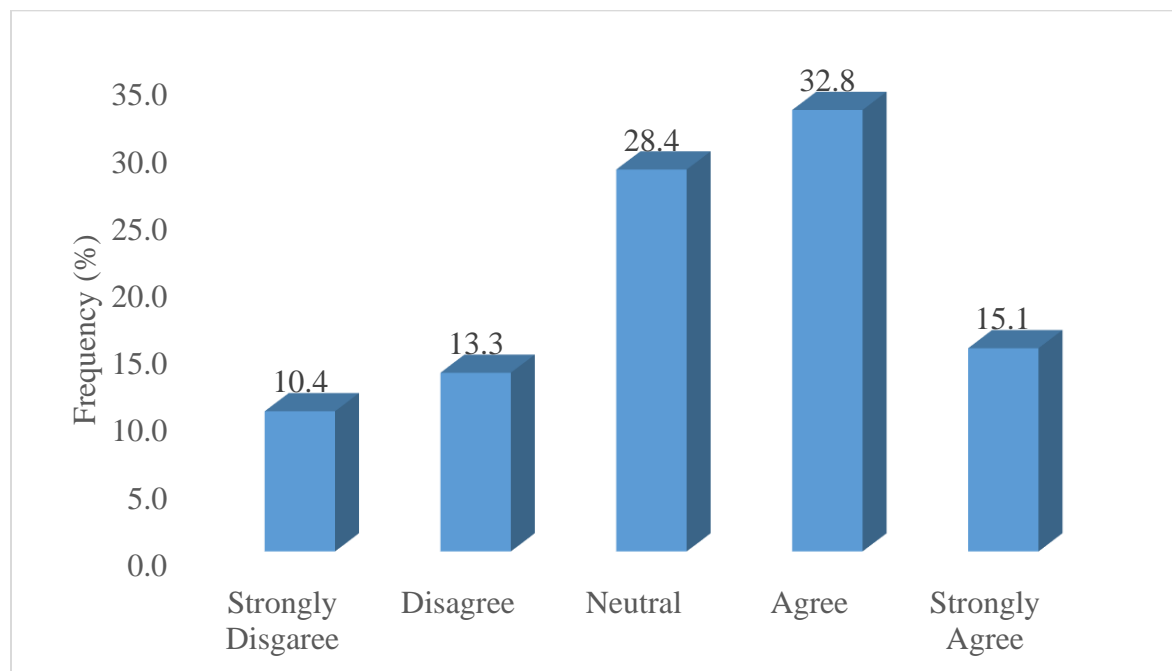


Figure 1: Willingness to recommend the use of Aso-Oke as graduation gown

Figure 2 reveals the willingness of the students to accept the use of Aso-oke as graduation gown. The highest percentage of the students agreed they are willing to accept the use of Aso-oke as graduation gown (36.7%), 16.7% strongly agreed, 19.8% were neutral, 14.8% disagreed while 12.0% strongly disagreed to the willingness to accept the use of Aso-oke as graduation gown.

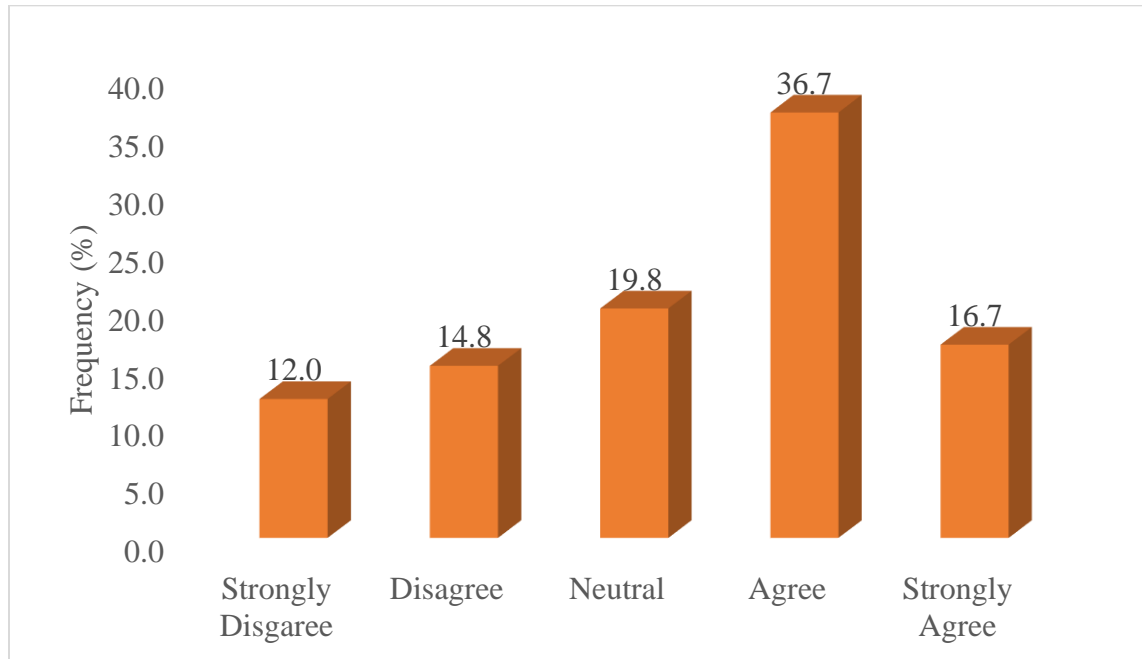


Figure 2: Willingness to accept the use of Aso-oke as graduation gown

Figure 3 reveals the willingness of the students to pay for Aso-oke as graduation gown. Highest percentage of the students agreed they would pay for Aso-oke as their graduation gown (37.2%), 16.7% strongly agreed, 21.1% were neutral, 16.4% disagreed while 8.6% strongly disagreed to their willingness to pay for Aso-oke as their graduation gown.

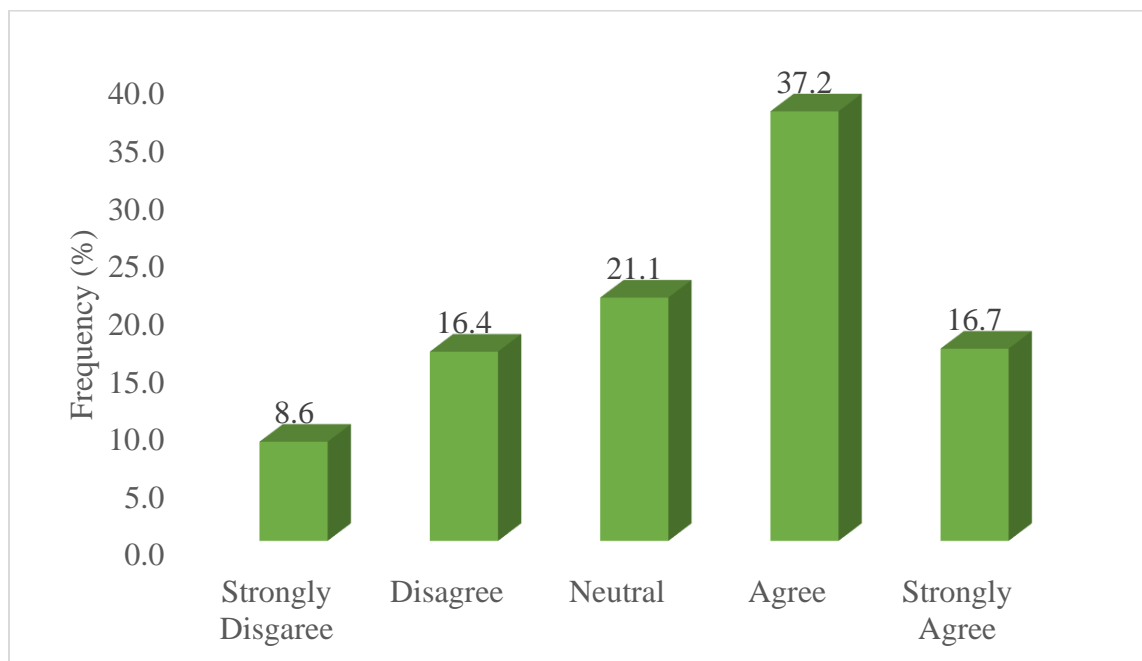


Figure 3: Willingness to pay for Aso-oke as graduation gown

Table 3 reveals the t-test of difference between the perceptions and acceptance of Aso-oke as graduation gown. There is a significant difference in the perception “Aso-oke fabrics as graduation gowns would be less expensive to produce and purchase” between public and private schools ( $P < 0.05$ ). Also, there is a significant difference in the perception “The use of Aso-oke fabrics will promote cultural heritage of the local community” between public and private schools ( $P < 0.05$ ). Furthermore, there is a significant difference in the perception that “The graduation gown produced from the Aso-oke can serve as a source of income for the local community” between public and private schools ( $P < 0.05$ ).

**Table 3: Difference in perception and acceptance of Aso-Oke as a graduation gown**

Statements	Public	Private	t value	Sig. value	Decision
Aso-oke fabrics as graduation gowns would be less expensive to produce and purchase.	2.96	3.84	-6.092	0.000	Significant
Aso-oke fabrics as graduation gowns would be attractive to wear.	3.57	3.53	0.260	0.795	Not significant
Aso-oke fabrics are well-designed more than the plain graduation gowns.	3.67	3.72	-0.341	0.734	Not significant
Aso-oke fabrics are a good substitute for graduation gowns.	3.32	3.46	-1.070	0.286	Not Significant
Aso-oke fabrics are of unique quality.	3.89	3.84	0.357	0.721	Not Significant
Using Aso-oke fabrics will promote the local community's cultural heritage.	4.01	4.36	-2.497	0.013	Significant
The graduation gown produced from the Aso-oke can serve as a source of income for the local community.	3.91	4.33	-4.113	0.000	Significant
I can confidently publicise the patronage of the gown among other students.	3.54	3.64	-0.781	0.436	Not significant
I cannot be ashamed of wearing the graduation gown made from Aso-oke fabric.	3.52	3.61	-0.785	0.433	Not significant
Using Aso-oke fabrics would improve the image of my school.	3.29	3.42	-0.910	0.363	Not significant
I will recommend the use of Aso-oke fabrics as graduation gowns.	3.26	3.41	-1.048	0.295	Not significant
I am willing to accept the use of Aso-oke fabrics as graduation gowns.	3.27	3.48	-1.394	0.164	Not significant
I am willing to pay to accept the use of Aso-oke fabrics as graduation gowns.	3.36	3.42	-0.449	0.654	Not significant

$P < 0.05$

Table 4 reveals the relationship between the perception and acceptability of Aso-oke. The table shows a significant relationship between the perceptions of Aso-oke as graduation gowns and their acceptability as graduation gowns ( $P < 0.05$ ).

**Table 4: Relationship between perception and acceptance of Aso-oke as a graduation gown**

Statement	Correlation value (r)	Sig. value	Decision
Aso-oke fabrics as graduation gowns would be less expensive to produce and purchase.	0.431	0.000	Significant
Aso-oke fabrics as graduation gowns would be attractive to wear.	0.641	0.000	Significant
Aso-oke fabrics are well designed more than the plain graduation gowns.	0.545	0.000	Significant
Aso-oke fabrics are a good substitute for graduation gown.	0.730	0.000	Significant
Aso-oke fabrics are of unique qualities.	0.502	0.000	Significant
The use of Aso-oke fabrics will promote cultural heritage of the local community.	0.446	0.000	Significant
The graduation gown produced by the Aso-oke can serve as a source of income for the local community.	0.500	0.000	Significant
I can confidently publicise the patronage of the gown among other students.	0.723	0.000	Significant
I cannot be ashamed of wearing the graduation gown made from Aso-oke fabric.	0.692	0.000	Significant
Using Aso-oke fabrics would improve the image of my school.	0.747	0.000	Significant

P<0.05

Table 5 reveals the relationship between socio-demographic characteristics and the perception of Aso-oke as a graduation gown. There is a significant relationship between perception of Aso-oke and gender (P<0.05), age (P<0.05), marital status (P<0.05), religion (P<0.05), occupation (P<0.05), and income (P<0.05).

**Table 5: Relationship between sociodemographic characteristics and perception on Aso-oke as graduation gown**

Variables	Chi-Square value ( $\chi^2$ )	Sig. value	Decision
Gender	198.299	0.000	Significant
Age	705.036	0.000	Significant
Marital status	184.869	0.000	Significant
Religion	236.395	0.000	Significant
Occupation	596.564	0.000	Significant
Income	483.361	0.000	Significant

P<0.05

### Discussion

The findings of this study revealed that the of Aso-oke fabrics holds the potential to elevate the local community's cultural heritage. This underscores the significance of preserving the cultural



legacy that has been transmitted across successive generations. Aso-oke fabrics possess distinctive qualities that render them unique, and their commercialisation could serve as a viable income source for the local community. This aligns with the assertions of Diyaolu and Omotosho (2020), who emphasised that Aso-oke's cultural significance and relevance contribute to its value. Furthermore, the study indicated that Aso-oke fabrics exhibit superior quality compared to imported alternatives.

Furthermore, this investigation unveiled that Aso-oke fabrics exhibit superior design compared to plain graduation gowns. This observation aligns harmoniously with the insights of Atanda (2015), who posited that crafting traditional cloth entails a series of intricate processes. These encompass the preparation of yarn derived from cotton plant materials, the dyeing of the yarn to yield the desired vibrant threads, the acquisition of advanced expertise in cloth weaving, and the creation of an array of tools and apparatus, such as looms, motors, spreaders, rollers, and pedals, employed by entrepreneurs in the production process. The culmination of these multifaceted steps contributes to the inherent superior design of Aso-oke fabrics. As a consequence of their notable design, respondents express a heightened willingness to proudly endorse the gown's use among fellow students.

The study also revealed that the respondents cannot be ashamed of wearing the graduation gown made from Aso-oke fabric. Olutayo et al. (2011) also agreed that traditional clothes (Aso-oke) can be used for celebration during ceremonies. This also implies that it can be used as a substitute for graduation gown since it can be used for celebration.

This research also showed that Aso-oke fabrics as graduation gowns would be less expensive to produce and purchase. This is contrary with Diyaolu and Omotosho (2020) who found out that Aso-oke is costly. This study revealed that most of the respondents are willing to accept, pay and recommend the use of Aso-oke as graduation gown.

The study revealed that there is a significant difference between the perception of Aso-oke fabric as a graduation gown is expensive to produce and purchase, the use of the Aso-oke fabric promoting the cultural heritage of the local community, and the graduation gown produced from Aso-oke serving as a source of income for local community among students of private and public schools. The study also shows a significant relationship between the perception and acceptance of Aso-oke as a graduation gown among students of private and public schools. Furthermore, the study revealed a significant relationship between socio-demographic characteristics and perception of Aso-oke between students in public and private schools, indicating that the differences in the students' socio-demographic characteristics influence their perception of the use of Aso-oke as a graduation gown.

### **Conclusion and Recommendation**

This study aimed to find out students' acceptance of Aso-oke, to be used as ceremonial wear, such as graduation gowns. The expectation is to find out a culturally effective way to make graduation ceremonies more colourful while promoting the cultural heritage of local communities. Based on the result of this study, the researcher concludes that Aso-oke as a graduation gown will promote the local community's heritage while improving the local communities' economy through income obtained from the sales of these local fabrics. The study also concludes that the students are willing to accept the use of Aso-oke as graduation gowns in their school ceremonies, and they are also willing to recommend the use of Aso-oke to other schools. The study also concludes that the

students are willing to pay to use Aso-oke as graduation fabric in their schools, indicating their acceptance of adopting these local fabrics for graduation ceremonies in their schools. These positive perceptions and willingness of the respondents to accept the use of this local fabric will promote the image of the fabric, which is a local product and will thus improve the economy and image of the local communities while enhancing the prospects of the country to perform well in foreign exchange activities. This study has thus contributed to the body of knowledge in the textile industry by revealing students' perception of localised fabric and their acceptance of these local fabrics for occasions, thereby indicating that investing in the nation's textile industry in the aspect of local fabrics such as Aso-oke will improve the standard of living of local people, improve the economy of the local communities and the country at large. The study is limited to universities in Nigeria alone, that is, students' acceptability of Aso-oke for use as graduation gowns in Nigerian universities. Extending it beyond this scope may not give room for thorough research based on the country's high number of different institutions. However, the study can be replicated further in other institutions within the country to provide more perspectives on the subject matter. Therefore, the study recommends that both public and private universities in the Southwest should be using Aso-oke as their graduation gown. This will improve the standard of living and promote the image of Yoruba culture through traditional dress.

## References

- Ademuleya B. A. (2014). Ondo in the history of Aso-oke weaving in southwestern Nigeria. *Mediterranean Journal of Black and African Arts and Civilization*, 5(11), 129-144.
- Aremu, I. (2005). *End of (Textile) Industry? A critical study of the collapse of textile industry in Nigeria and the implications for employment and poverty eradication*. Friedrich Ebert Stitfund.
- Atanda, F.A. (2015). An evaluation of the indigenous textile (*aso-oke*) industry performance in Yoruba Land, Southwestern Nigeria. *Fountain Journal of Management and Social Sciences*, 4(1), 114 – 131.
- Disele, P.L.P., Tyler, D. & Power, Jess (2011). Conserving and sustaining culture through traditional dress. *Journal of Social Development in Africa*, 26 (1), 15-45.
- Diyaolu I.J. & Omotosho H.R. (2020). Aso Òkè weaving techniques and perception in Iseyin, Oyo State, Nigeria. *Hidden Stories/Human Lives: Proceedings of the Textile Society of America 17th Biennial Symposium* 1-10.
- Diyaolu, I. J. (2010). Role of dress in socio-cultural events among the Ijebu-Yoruba, Ogun State, Nigeria,” *Journal of Home Economics Research* 13, 35-41.
- Muhammad M., Buba R., Agboola Y.H. & Lola, G.K. (2018). Nigerian textile industry: evidence of policy neglect. *SARJANA*, 33(1), 40-56.
- Olutayo A.O., Olayinka A.,& Fadina O.A. (2011). Aso-oke (Hand woven textile) of southwestern Nigeria: A compact examination of a resilient artifact. *American Journal of Sociological Research*. 1(1), 9-17
- Owen M. M., Ogunleye C. O. & Orekoya E. O. (2016). The Nigerian Textile Industry: An Overview. *Nigerian Journal of Polymer Science and Technology*, .11, 99-108.