

Decolonizing cultural names: A driving force behind the choice of certain African wax-printed fabrics as uniforms for Igbo women's groups in south-eastern Nigeria

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doi: <https://dx.doi.org/10.4314/aa.v23i1.1>

Abstract

In West Africa, Nigeria to be precise, African wax prints are seen as one of the Indigenous garbs characterized by bold and colourful designs. The Igbo(found in the Eastern part of Nigeria) women folk make use of these fabrics for various occasions such as uniforms for various groups or associations worn during weddings, chieftaincy title taking, christening of new born, women monthly meetings, burial ceremonies, church activities, home and abroad women meetings (August meeting) and also as casual wear. One of the major places they are imported into in Nigeria by some textile merchants is Onitsha (a commercial nerve centre) situated in the Eastern part of the country where the Igbo reside. They are given some unique numbers which could be found printed on the selvedge during their production in Holland for proper identification and registration such as 14/0927, A2161, 14/D954, S4118 and others. The number refers to the print design. They have created and produced around 20.000 designs in the last 168 years and this helps with registration. However, these numbers are mostly for official records in the factory in that the merchants rename some of them once they land on Eastern Nigeria soil. This study argues that though the fabrics are designed and made in Holland, the indigenous names they are baptized with decolonize them, making them possess an Igbo identity to the indigenes that make use of them. Some of these names are in the Igbo, pidgin, and English languages. This action in return makes them popular in demand and usage among the Igbo. It also argues that the de-colonial approach utilized by these merchants (they import large quantity of these printed fabrics into country by sea or air) to rename these fabrics has not been sufficiently documented by scholars. The objectives of this paper are to find out why these indigenous names are given, why the women prefer the fabrics with names and also document some of those fabrics and the names given. This paper employs the use of participant observation method, interviews and photography as research instruments. It employed the trickle theory in fashion and the theory of adaptation (natural selection). It found out that the indigenous names given to these "Igbo hollandaise"

are one of the major reasons behind their usage as uniforms for different women groups. It concludes that the decolonization of these names played a huge role in the world of African textiles and its economic growth in Igbo communities.

Keywords: Decolonization, Igbo, Indigenous language, Indigenous names, African wax-printed textiles, textiles, Igbo women, Igbo language.

Introduction

From an anthropological perspective, the practice of naming all things in life like people, animals, places, and objects embodies the human need to categorize and understand the world. Anthropologists see naming as a way to impose order on the natural and social environment, making it comprehensible and manageable (Levi-Strauss, 1966; Duranti, 1997). It also acts as a means of cultural expression, revealing symbolic meanings and cultural priorities (Basso, 1996). Furthermore, naming can carry spiritual, religious, or ancestral significance, linking individuals or objects to larger cosmological or spiritual beliefs (Evans-Pritchard, 1956). For example, some cultures believe that naming confers power or protection, and names may be chosen through rituals that emphasize their importance (Agyekum, 2006). In anthropology naming is seen as a culturally embedded practice that helps define identity, establish social relationships, and articulate the worldview of a community. It underscores the deep connection between language, culture, and the way humans interpret their world (Duranti, 1997).

Globally, every object (living and non-living things) possesses names. Naming is the process of giving names and a combination of words by which a person, place or thing, body, or object is designated, called, or known. According to Cookey and Ijioma (2019), naming is an important ceremony and every society has a unique way of accomplishing the process. They mentioned that in Igbo society, majority of the Igbo names are not gender sensitive; they are drawn mainly from the situations surrounding the birth of the child or the family. However, they observed that the English names that abound in Igbo land today are the aftermath of

colonization, modernization and Christianity. Naming is an identification marker and as old as the world because it helps to recognize someone or something. Cookey and Ijioma (2019) further mentioned that it is believed to have been introduced by God at creation. They mentioned that naming is as old as mankind and drew inferences from the Bible which said that after the creation of the first man, God named him Adam (Genesis 2: 18-22). The name Adam is derived from a Hebrew word *Adama* meaning man or earth. Hence man was made from earth. They proclaimed that the first man imitated what God did in naming him and named the first woman Eve and stated that she was the mother of all that is living (Genesis 3:20). They also had some children whom they named Cain and Abel. And so forth and so on. Essien (2004) in Cookey and Ijioma (2019) states that:

From the beginning, naming had been an important duty man had to perform not only to distinguish animals from birds but man from man to facilitate linguistic communication. Brothers had to be distinguished from brothers, sisters from sisters and siblings from siblings especially in the ancient days when polygamy and concubines were normal and pro-creation in large numbers was a virtue.

Cookey and Ijioma (2019) asserts that names have psychological effects which could be positive or negative. They also believe that names embody unseen spiritual powers which follow the bearer, the name is the bearer and the destiny of the bearer, to them names speak for the persons that bears them.

This study is of the view that if people do not have names as well as things in the world, the resultant effect will be catastrophic in that everything will remain unidentified and mistaken for another. Therefore, names are of great importance to the human race, for easy identification and clarity. The researcher has observed in the society she lives in that naming of humans is quite different from the naming of objects, people could be named after a prominent person, a saint, a great achiever, and an admired person of great repute, for instance, there are some males of the Catholic faith named after Pope John Paul II (18 May 1920- 2 April 2005), who was the head of the Catholic Church and Sovereign of the Vatican city from 16 October until his death in 2005. He is remembered for his successful efforts to

end communism, as well as for building bridges with peoples of other faiths, and issuing the Catholic Church's first apology for its actions during World War II (History.com editors, 2025), those could probably be the reasons why his name was chosen to be given.

African cultures assign deeper meanings and cultural substance when ascribing names to their offspring and other objects both living and non-living. This is evident in the ceremonies, rites, and traditions that are upheld during the naming of a child and other objects. Across Africa, the naming of objects is a culturally rich and context-dependent practice, deeply embedded in linguistic, historical, and spiritual traditions. Unlike Western naming conventions, which often prioritize functional or descriptive terms, African societies frequently infuse names for objects with layers of meaning that reflect communal values, ancestral heritage, or cosmological beliefs (Agyekum, 2006). For example, among the Akan of Ghana, objects are often named to commemorate significant events, honour ancestors, or express proverbs and philosophical ideas. This practice turns everyday items into vessels of memory and social identity (Agyekum, 2006). For instance, in many African cultures, the process of naming is not arbitrary but guided by elders or knowledgeable community members who ensure that the name aligns with cultural norms and taboos (Obeng, 2001). Names might be chosen based on the material, the object's intended use, or the circumstances of its acquisition. Among the Yoruba, for instance, ritual objects, musical instruments, and tools often receive names that denote their spiritual efficacy or reference mythological narratives, thus embedding them within a broader symbolic universe (Adeoye, 1979). This approach reflects the belief that objects, much like people, possess a form of social life and agency, and that naming serves to activate or acknowledge this status (Guyer, 1993). Naming practices for objects in Africa thus extend beyond simple identification. They function as a means of storytelling, socialization, and the preservation of collective memory, underscoring the dynamic interplay between language, culture, and meaning (Obeng, 2001). The Igbo people, have a rich tradition of naming objects, people, and places that reflects their cultural values, environment, and worldview. In Igbo culture, names are deeply meaningful and often descriptive, encapsulating attributes, origins, functions, or spiritual significance.

The Igbo give names through various ways, for instance: 1) Descriptive Naming Based on Physical Features- Many Igbo object names describe physical attributes or functions. For example, "ụkwụ" means "leg," and by extension, "ụkwụ oche" means "chair leg"—literally, "leg of a chair." This pattern extends to numerous objects, where their function or a salient feature is used to create the name (Onukawa, 1999); 2) Compound and Derivative Naming- Igbo often forms object names by compounding words. For example, "akwụkwọ" (book or paper) comes from "akwụ" (palm frond) and "akwụkwọ" (leaf), originally referencing palm leaves used for writing (Echeruo, 2001); 3) Onomatopoeia and Sound Association-Some object names are derived from sounds associated with their use. For example, "ngwà" (implement/tool) references the action or sound made during use (Emenanjo, 1978); and 4) Spiritual and Symbolic Naming- Certain objects have names with spiritual or symbolic meanings, reflecting their role in rituals or traditional beliefs. For instance, "ọfọ" is a symbolic object representing truth and authority in Igbo culture, and its name is tied to its spiritual function (Uchendu, 1965).

Over the years, the West African tradition of naming a child has intricately evolved due to colonization, urbanization, and globalization. In pre-colonial times, names were assigned based on a collection of reasons such as circumstances surrounding the child's birth, day of birth, hopes and aspirations of the family, as well as ancestral and religious connections (Landtours, 2024). Ethnic and dialectic differences also play an important role in naming a child. Nigeria to be precise, is a very ethnically diverse country with 371 ethnic groups, which Igbo is one of the major groups and one of the largest ethnic groups. They name their people in the indigenous language after circumstances surrounding their births, based on names found in various holy books, and what their parents passed through before giving birth to them. For instance in Igbo land, the researcher being the fourth female child was named by her grand-father '*chinyeogwa*' which means God should bless her parents by mixing their offspring with both sexes (male and female). Her parents had longed for a male child. She also mentioned that that her mother gave birth to a son after two years of her birth who was named '*Obioha*' which means the people's/ community's/crowds' desire.

Igbo naming traditions are as dynamic as the cultures within it. For instance, some children are named after the day of the market days they were born, which has an even more profound and spiritual connotation. There are four market days in Igboland- *Orie/Oye*, *Afor/Ahor*, *Nkwo*, and *Eke*. A female child born on *Orie* market day would be named *Mgborie/Mgboye*. The spelling may differ according to dialects (there are five states in Igbo land namely Imo, Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi and Enugu. Each have their own dialects); the Igbo from Imo, Ebonyi and Abia states would name the newborn *Mgborie*, while those from Anambra and Enugu would name *Mgboye*, also the male by the former would be *Okorie* while the latter would be *Okoye* and so on yet the meanings transcend beyond the day of birth. On the other hand, various objects like household items, fabrics, food, crops, and others utilized by them are also named, some of which are motivated by the services they render for instance a wooden ladle named *eku*. This means fetch, motivated by the service the wooden spoon renders; this has been observed and noticed by the researcher during this study.

Some fabrics utilized by Nigerian women

Fabrics are materials made from fibers, either natural or man-made, that are interwoven, intertwined, or bonded together to create flexible sheets. They are commonly used to make clothing, household items, and various other products. Fabric can be divided into two different categories. These include natural and synthetic (artificial/manufactured). The natural fabrics could be plant-based or animal-based. Common examples of natural fabrics include cotton, denim, wool, linen, bamboo, sinamay, and silk. The fibres that constitute these fabrics can always be sourced from natural origins. For example, cotton is obtained from the cotton plant, silk is obtained from the cocoon of the silkworm, and wool is obtained from sheep and other animals. On the other hand, synthetic fabrics are man-made materials created through chemical processes, primarily derived from petroleum or other fossil fuels. These materials are transformed into polymers, which are then processed into fibers and spun into yarns that can be woven or knitted into fabrics. Synthetic fibers fall into groups based on the polymer the fibers are made from, such as the three that are most commonly

used in textiles: acrylic, polyamide (Nylon), polyester, there are also elastin (Lycra), polyvinyl chloride (PVC) and polypropylene (used in carpets). Polypropylene used in carpets originates from petrochemical sources—specifically, it is a synthetic polymer derived from the polymerization of propylene, a byproduct of petroleum refining and natural gas processing. The production process generally involves the following steps 1) Raw Material Extraction: Propylene gas is obtained either as a byproduct during the refining of crude oil or during the processing of natural gas; 2) Polymerization: The propylene monomers are chemically bonded together (polymerized) using catalysts in a controlled industrial process to form polypropylene resin (plastic pellets); 3) Fiber Manufacturing: The polypropylene pellets are melted and extruded into fine fibers (yarn), which are then processed into carpet backing or face fibers for use in various types of carpets and rugs (PlasticsEurope, 2022; Andrady & Neal, 2009). However, various fabrics made from natural and synthetic fibres are utilized by the women in contemporary fashion, these could be imported or indigenously made. Some of the indigenous fabrics are produced in Nigeria (for instance the hand woven fabrics which are Akwete, Aso-oke, Anger and others) while georges, brocades, laces, damask and African wax-printed fabrics also used as indigenous attires are not manufactured in Nigeria. Some fabrics used in constructing indigenous clothing in Nigeria, have individual names which could be based on their origin, woven structures, type of fibres used in production, indigenous manufacturers, services they render and surface designs used for embellishment. For instance, *Akwete* hand woven fabrics originated from Igbo in Nigeria, they are produced in Akwete-Igbo (Igbo land is located in Southeastern Nigeria, today, as mentioned earlier, it has five states: Anambra, Imo, Enugu, Abia, and Ebonyi-in which the common language which is Igbo is spoken- these areas are the major concerns of this paper. Although smaller fractions of the Igbo could also be found in Delta, Benue, Edo, Kogi, Rivers States. These fabrics are named Akwete, after the name of the town where they originated from (Chudi-Duru, 2017)). Akwete hand woven fabrics are produced in Akwete town situated in Ndoki and Asa areas of Abia State, Southeastern part of Nigeria. In these areas, women and girls practiced the art of cloth weaving using the women's vertical loom. They weave with factory made synthetic threads. These are easier and cheaper than cotton

threads they were formally making use of. The designs on Akwete fabrics are quite intricate and colourful. The weavers make use of numerous motifs which they use in decorating the fabrics. These symbolic motifs convey lots of messages based on Igbo culture, historic acts, proverbs, happenings in the society and women's perception of life (Chudi-Duru, 2017)). Davis (1974) proclaims, that the weavers claim to know over one hundred motifs which were used to decorate the fabrics used as clothing. These clothing serve as personal adornments to the Igbo. They were also used for identification, spiritual protection, sold for economic purposes, given out as gifts, used to pay a girl's dowry and for decoration purposes. Afigbo and Okeke (1982) and Goodlife (2019) in (Chudi-Duru, 2017) believed that the legendary weaver Dada Nwakata who is acclaimed to be the founder of Akwete weaving began weaving with designs of her invention. She is said to be the founder of Akwete weaving and has remained a role model for Akwete weavers who like her claim they can weave any cloth design set before them. Dada Nwakata unraveled threads from an open woven cotton cloth locally known as "acham" brought to the area through trade with the Potoki (Portuguese) between the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries when the latter operated in the Bight of Biafra. After studying the weave structures of the heavily ornamented cloth, Dada Nwakata copied them and secretly began to weave a new style of Akwete designs. This style was revealed after her death by a deaf and dumb friend who was the only person she permitted in her company when she wove her cloths. These fabrics are utilized by the Igbo and Ijaw tribes(a neighboring tribe at the boarder of Akwete town.)An Akwete woman weaving with the women's vertical loom is placed in plate 1a.

Another fabric utilized by the Igbo are laces. In Nigeria, laces are prestigious and status symbols. Both males and females adorn themselves in laces. According to Silke (2012) in Chudi-Duru(2021), in the 1960s, they became the symbol of the new independent Nigeria. During that time, they were of great value and passed down from one generation to the other. Most of these African laces are produced in Austria. A town called Lustenau in Austria is specially known for producing African laces since the end of 1950s. This town with its serene environment and twenty-one thousand inhabitants owes up to a third of its wealth to the African lace business. She further mentions that single family homes with long garages own

embroidery machines in Lustenau; a special African lace taxi service by Mama Bosch and other services like hotels, shipping agencies and others in order to help the African lace customers when they are on business in Lustenau. Silke is of the view that the West African market was overtaken accidentally. Since around 1880, in Lustenau and its environs, machines were used to produce laces and embroidery not by hand any longer. Consequently, more companies began to produce works of embroidery for humankind but mainly for United Kingdom, United States of America and Russia. The production was decrepit after the Second World War and this led to the closure of most of these companies. In 1940s and at the beginning of 1950s, some pioneers of lace makers travelled to Asia- Japan to be precise and Arabia. The business relationship with Arabia was faring well and was expanded to Africa – Sudan to be precise. However, when one of the lace sellers was travelling to Khartoum, he had to make a stopover in Lagos. Reason being that there was no direct flight from Zurich to Khartoum. He used the 8 hours waiting to visit the local markets in Lagos with his suitcase filled with samples of lace. Both lace seller and the lace ladies were quite excited in that, the ladies on seeing these samples were ordering as much as they could while the seller went back to Austria and proudly declared that he has captured a new distribution market for the Austrian lace companies. Since that time, she says that the African lace market is the most important distribution market for the Austrian embroidery industry. In 2011, roughly 60% of the laces produced were sold to African customers with its main markets in Nigeria, Senegal, Ghana, and Benin and the African in diaspora- UK, US and Canada.



Figure 1a: **Akwete weaving.** Mrs. Nneoma Okere, an Igbo of *Akwete*, working on an *Akwete* cloth in *Akwete* town, utilizing the *ikaki* (tortoise), *igbe akwukwo* (box of books) and *ute* (mat) motifs to weave a design. Photograph by Chudi-Duru, C.C (2015). Some samples of Akwete hand woven fabrics are placed below.



Figure 1b: Samples of Akwete hand woven fabrics. Photograph by Chudi-Duru, C.C (2025).

These African laces are nowadays worn by the Igbo women at traditional occasions such as during baptism, weddings, birthdays, burials or as uniforms known as *asoebi* (a borrowed Yoruba word which means family cloth). Men, women and close friends of the family concerned wear the same African lace in the same colour but tailored differently. From the above it could also be ascertained that laces are not made in Nigeria but are utilized in their dress fashion till date. A sample of lace fabric is placed in figure 1c.



Figure 1c: Sample of lace fabric. Source: <https://www.google.com/search>

Another is the *aso-oke*, a hand- woven fabric produced by the Yoruba using the men's horizontal loom in Southwestern Nigeria. Aso-oke means top cloth, and was named after the purpose of the cloth- it is usually tied on top of the cloth worn. It usually comes in stripes, joined together by stitching to form a large piece of cloth. It also makes use of some motifs which have cultural significance to the Yoruba culture. Samples of Aso-oke indigenous hand woven fabrics are placed in figure 1d.



Figure 1d: Some samples of Aso-oke hand woven fabric. Photo credit: Urbanstax.com

George cloth (non-indigenous) which originated from India where it is used to make saris and became popular among African royals and noble families got its name from Fort St. George. The name "George" actually came from its Indian roots specifically around Madras (now Chennai), where it was known as "*George cloth*" after Fort St. George. The British established Fort St. George in Madras in 1639. The area around Fort St. George became known for producing fine, often embroidered, textiles, which were referred to as "George cloth" These Indian textiles were traded along European trade routes, eventually reaching West Africa, including Nigeria. The Igbo people embraced this fabric and used it to create wrappers for ceremonial and traditional events. The fabric's luxurious quality and elegant appearance made it a symbol of wealth, status, and tradition, especially for women, who wore it as wrappers. Over time, the name "George cloth" evolved into "George wrapper" in Nigeria, reflecting its primary use and the cultural significance it gained (Mfonobong, 2025). Another narrative by Naira land (2025) says that It is difficult to say exactly who introduced the George wrapper into Ijaw land (Ijaw land (Rivers State) shares a boarder with the Igbo), while some scholars agree that it was a European merchant named GEORGE Goldie who was the founder of the Royal Niger Company in 1870s that first introduced this fabric into Ijaw land, thus the wrapper was named after him as "George wrapper". Other scholars equally agree that George Wrapper was first introduced into Bonny (a town in Rivers State of Nigeria) by King George Oruigbiji Pepple 1 of Bonny (reigned between 1866-1883) after his sojourn in England. From Bonny the wrapper became very popular and soon got to neighboring Ijaw kingdoms until it even got as far as the heart of Igbo lands, thus the wrapper was named after him, yet another set of historians believe that neither of the above postulations are correct about the origin of George wrapper because the authentic origin of George wrapper into Ijaw land was in 1910 when King George of England visited southern Nigeria and women in Ijaw land were given these wrappers by the British colonial government to wear and welcome the English King. There are plain and decorated George wrappers. However, Chudi-Duru (2021) observes, that all these fabrics mentioned above are utilized by the Igbo women in contemporary fashion. Some samples of George fabrics are placed in figure 1e.



Figure 1e: Some samples of Aso-oke hand woven fabric. Photo credit: Urbanstax.com

Another fabric utilized by the Igbo in South Eastern Nigeria is African wax printed fabrics otherwise known as Dutch wax hollandaise (Vlisco), which has been in existence since 1846. According to Archer (2016), the story of Vlisco begins not in Dakar, Lagos, or Accra, but in the small Dutch city of Helmond, where, in 1846, industrialist Pieter Fentener van Vlissingen purchased a textile factory with the goal of selling upholstery fabric, bedspreads, and handkerchiefs abroad. Van Vlissingen began creating imitation batik fabric based on designs from Indonesia, then known as the Dutch East Indies, with the goal of capitalizing on new roller printing technology that could affect the look of batik without all the labor-intensive work required to make the real thing. Batik originated in China and India in the 8th century, and it was refined in 13th-century Indonesia with the development of a new tool for applying hot wax to fabric known as *canting*, likely an Anglicized form of the word *tjanting*. When Dutch imitators such as van Vlissingen entered the business, Indonesians noticed small flaws in their fabrics namely a “crackle” effect, the result of small veins of pigment leaking through the wax resist and the Dutch East Indies even went so far as to ban their sale in the 19th century. But other areas of the Dutch empire provided a ready, if unexpected, marketplace. Vlisco fabrics became a popular item in a different part of the Dutch colonial ecosystem, starting in Ghana, which was then called the Gold Coast. A section of the Vlisco factory in the 1950s–60s is placed in figure 1f.



Figure 1f: The Vlisco factory in the 1950s–60s (image courtesy Vlisco)

Archer (2016) further mentions that between 1855 and 1872, approximately 3,000 Ghanaian soldiers served in the Royal Netherlands East Indies Army. They returned home, as servicemen often do, with a taste for items they encountered abroad. As the story goes, the soldiers had learned to appreciate the look of genuine batik but didn't mind the crackle of the van Vlissingen version, so they purchased bolts of it for their female relatives back in Ghana. By the turn of the century, despite the ceding of the colony to the UK, the sale of Dutch-made faux batik in the Gold Coast was robust. By the 1930s, it was being adapted to suit Ghanaian tastes, not by accident, but by design. According to Dilys Blum, the PMA's senior curator of costume and textiles who organized the exhibition, the trend was so popular that several companies based in England, France, and Switzerland began producing faux batik fabrics in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Van Vlissingen responded by consolidating its grip on the marketplace and buying up several smaller concerns. Thus, a fabric produced in Europe with Asia in mind never quite hit the mark in its intended marketplace, but found an enthusiastic audience at the opposite end of the empire.

Archer (2016) notes that in 1927, the company adopted the more modern name of Vlisco. Terms such as “Dutch Wax,” “Veritable Dutch Hollandais,” and “Wax Hollandais” were also commonly used for Vlisco fabrics, but branding became more important when World War II temporarily halted production in the Netherlands. Imitators sprang into action, producing knockoffs for the West African market. In the years following the war, purveyors of Vlisco fabrics became increasingly concerned with authenticity and protecting their business from the ersatz textiles (a slightly ironic phenomenon, given the company’s origin as an imitator itself). Since 1963, Vlisco fabrics have been stamped with the phrase “Guaranteed Dutch Wax Vlisco” on every selvage, making proof of authenticity an important aspect of the product’s allure. Today, the Vlisco Group has four brands: Vlisco, Woodin, Uniwax, and GTP (Ghana Textiles Printing Company). The latter three are produced in parts of Africa, and all four market their slightly different designs to slightly different segments of that continent’s marketplace. To this day, Vlisco’s precise mode of production remains a trade secret, with 27 distinct steps carried out by both machine and hand.

Since the early 20th century, Vlisco has produced African wax-print cloth – otherwise known as Dutch wax- prints. This vibrantly coloured and intricately patterned fabric dominates West African markets and is globally recognized as quintessentially “African”(Sylvanus, 2007).

The Igbo women make use of these African wax- printed fabrics in their day- to day fashion and also as uniforms for their various meetings. Although not every woman could afford Hollandaise because of the costs, there are Chinese imitations which bear the same designs

that are also African prints. These are quite cheap, synthetic and do not last like Dutch wax-printed fabrics. However, what matters most is whether the designs are the same but the quality can differ. Apart from the numbers given to them in the Vlisco factory as a mark of identity during production, the Igbo merchants saw a need to rename these fabrics which help in speeding up more sales, popularizing them to the buyer, provide easier identification, endear people to the designs and also for some elderly ones who do not really understand English language, to carry them along (Mr.Ifeanyichukwu-interviewee).

Many researches have been carried out by some researchers on African wax – printed fabrics and their usage by the Igbo but not much information were gathered on the subject matter by them, for instance Adeoti (2024) named and interpreted some meanings of some selected African prints and ankara fabric designs but did not relate it to Igbo women of Nigeria and how they make use of them. In the year 2000, Nnewuihe, observes that some of the fabrics were given different names based on their patterns and those names still hold till today. She further mentions only two African printed fabrics and observes that they are worn by different cultural and religious sects in West Africa and Nnewuihe notes that seeing a group of people in a certain fabric connotes that an event or gathering might be taking place. Nnewuihe further observes that the Catholic Women Organisation(CWO) in some parts of Igbo land, use the *Mkpuru Oka* fabric or the CWO uniform (also made of customized Ankara fabric) to attend wakes and a member may be fined if she fails to wear hers to such a gathering. She notes that uniformity in dressing has also become a cultural staple amongst many tribes in Nigeria and West Africa. Nnewuihe didn't conduct an in-depth study regarding why such names are given to these African wax printed textiles, she only mentioned few names given to African wax-prints out of more than 350 names and designs(according to Vlisco website) of these printed textiles and the pictures were not also displayed for a clearer understanding. Castonguay(2014), discusses the modern tale of

Nigerian wax-resist textiles but didn't mention the decolonizing of cultural names and why it is a driving force behind the choice of certain African wax-printed fabrics as uniforms for Igbo women's groups in South-Eastern Nigeria. The voice of inspiration (2016) mentions the Ghanaian names and meanings of few African prints not as regards to the Igbo. Chummun and Obiora(2021) investigated the African wax print business success through M-commerce in Nigeria, they concentrated on technological modernization, consumer demands, network chain and how they influence business success of African wax prints. Abiodun, A.A., Oyinloye, M.A., Oladesu, J.O.,& Kayode, T.D.(2023) assessed the factors influencing consumers' preference for African print fabrics in Southwestern Nigeria only. Arua (2021), discusses the meaning and identity creation in the culture of Hollandaise textiles use among the Igbo of Southeastern Nigeria, but he didn't delve into why some of the printed textiles are preferred as uniforms and the de-colonization of those names. This study is also of the view that these indigenous names and how they speed up sales and their usefulness as uniforms by Igbo women have not been sufficiently studied and recorded by scholars, therefore it has become pertinent to study and document them. Therefore the researcher explored how cultural decolonization of names has acted as a catalyst for the adoption of specific African wax-printed textile designs/fabrics as group uniforms, emphasizing the interconnectedness of names, identity, and cultural expression in Southeastern Nigeria. This research filled some gaps by exposing the reasons why these fabrics are named, those that name them, various names and pictures and also documented the preference of some of them as group uniforms in the midst of other materials used for clothing purposes.

Cultural decolonization

Cultural decolonization is a multidimensional process that involves the revival and assertion of indigenous identities that were marginalized during colonialism. In many African societies, names carry profound significance, encapsulating individual and collective identities, histories, and values. In the context of the Igbo, names carry significant cultural and personal meanings, often reflecting ancestral heritage, spiritual beliefs, and social status. During colonial rule, the imposition of European names and naming conventions led to a

dilution of these traditional practices (Achebe, 2000). In the post-colonial era, there has been a conscious effort to reclaim and reinstate traditional Igbo names- a resurgence in the use of traditional Igbo names, symbolizing a broader movement towards cultural decolonization and the reaffirmation of indigenous identities (Okonkwo, 2010).

African wax-printed textiles, commonly known as wax prints, have a complex history intertwined with both local traditions and global trade. These textiles, characterized by their vibrant colours and intricate patterns, were initially introduced to West Africa by European traders in the 19th century. Despite their foreign origins, wax - prints have been indigenized and become deeply embedded in African cultural practices (Perani and Wolff, 1999). They are usually given numbers in the industry for proper identification, but they are renamed in Igbo language by some merchants, pidgin or slangs in English language to suit the foreign environment they found themselves. One of the shops filled with customers buying these fabrics are placed on figure 2 below.



Figure 2: Nomaco resources, a shop in *Ogbo abada*(African-wax printed fabrics market) Onitsha. The researcher is seen here with one of the cloth merchants. Photo credit: Chika Chudi-Duru (2024).



Figure 3: Nwanyi Abagana fabric shop in Eke Awka market. The researcher is seen here interviewing one of the cloth merchants. Photo credit: Chika Chudi-Duru (2024).

These textiles are not just worn for their aesthetic appeal but are imbued with cultural meanings used to express social status, group affiliation, and identity (Sylvanus, 2007). Women's groups in South-Eastern Nigeria, often adopt uniforms to signify unity and collective identity. The choice of uniform is significant, as it communicates the group's values, aspirations, and social bonds. African wax-printed textiles are frequently chosen for this purpose due to their rich symbolic meanings and ability to convey cultural pride (Picton, 1995). The patterns and colours selected for these uniforms often have specific connotations, reflecting the group's identity and solidarity (Eicher, 1976). The use of indigenous names as part of the cultural decolonization process has influenced the preference for certain wax prints. Names and textiles both serve as powerful symbols of identity and cultural heritage. As Igbo women reclaim their indigenous names, which often carry deep personal and cultural significance, there is a parallel movement towards choosing textiles that reflect and reinforce these reclaimed identities (Garcia, 2011) thus the reason for this research. This synergy between names and textiles highlights the broader cultural

renaissance taking place in South-Eastern Nigeria, where traditional practices are being revitalized and celebrated.

The study employed the fashion theory of trickle- down described by Thorstein Veblen (1857-1929) in 1899 and George Simmel (1858-1918) in 1904 to engage the discourse of the Igbo named African wax printed fabrics among the women in Igbo society. Trickle-down, or upper-class theory, is one example of fashion theory. This theory is based on ideas related to the social class. The trickle-down effect is a marketing phenomenon where trends are set by individuals of higher socioeconomic status, followed by those of lower socioeconomic status. This phenomenon occurs when new consumer products are initially expensive and only accessible to the wealthy, but as they mature, their prices fall, making them more affordable for the general public. It is influenced by word of mouth or viral marketing, where advertisements are rapidly disseminated to increase the adoption of the product. The theory suggests that fashion trends flow from upper to lower classes in society (Anderson,2022). Once these Dutch-wax prints are named, the upper class are the first to procure them because they will be quite expensive, they use them to showcase their wealth, but when the demand becomes high, the cheaper versions are introduced into the market for the general public to purchase.

Furthermore, the theory of adaptation(natural selection) otherwise known as the survival of the fittest by Charles Darwin (1809-1882) in 1869, was employed by this study to highlight the ability of African wax printed fabrics to adapt to the Igbo environment for over a century. He stated that individuals in a population or community are more likely to survive if they fit into the environmental conditions. Similar to what those individuals consume. African wax-prints are one of them. They have been able to withstand the competitive market full of different kinds of laces, Indian madras, imported factory- produced fabrics and indigenous fabrics yet they remain the Igbo women's favourites. And some marketers are marketing them because they are still in demand in everyday sales.

Language and Indigenous language

Language, and especially indigenous language, is a fundamental part of cultural decolonization because it is deeply tied to identity, worldview, and collective memory. That is, for:

- **Reclaiming Identity and Worldview:**
Colonization often imposed foreign languages and suppressed indigenous ones, disconnecting people from their traditions and ways of thinking. Revitalizing and promoting indigenous languages restores a sense of identity and belonging, reinforcing worldviews that are embedded in the language itself (Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, 1986).
- **Preserving Knowledge and Traditions:**
Indigenous languages carry traditional knowledge, oral histories, philosophies, and unique ways of relating to the environment. By maintaining and revitalizing these languages, communities safeguard their cultural heritage and pass it on to future generations (UNESCO, 2019).
- **Resisting Cultural Erasure:**
Language loss is a key mechanism of cultural erasure. Decolonization involves resisting this erasure by ensuring indigenous languages are taught in schools, used in media, and spoken in daily life, thus affirming the presence and value of indigenous cultures in contemporary society (Battiste, 2013).
- **Empowering Communities:**
Using and valuing indigenous languages in public and official spaces empowers communities politically and socially. It challenges colonial hierarchies, demands recognition, and asserts the right to self-determination (Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, 1986; Battiste, 2013).

Language first evolved around 50,000-150,000 years ago, which is around the time when modern Homo sapiens evolved. It is defined by the Collins dictionary as a system of communication that consists of a set of sounds and written symbols that are used by the people of a particular country or region for talking or writing. Britannica.com sees language as a system of conventional spoken, manual (signed), or written symbols by means which human beings, as members of a social group and participants in culture express themselves. There are three types of language namely: written, oral, and nonverbal (designs, drawing, arts). There are different purposes of language which are as follows: to express identity (through accent, choice of vocabulary, mother's tongue influence) and subjectivity (through

personal imagery and sensory descriptions) as much as it is to communicate a message (Garcia, 2011). Every tribe in the world has its own language. More than 7,100 languages are spoken in the world today. Some of these languages are less widely spoken than others. English is the most spoken language in terms of native speakers (Klappenbach, 2022). In Africa, as of 2022, there were over 2,000 living languages in Africa. With over 520 languages, Nigeria accounted for around a fourth of the total languages spoken in Africa. Cameroon and the Democratic Republic of the Congo followed each with over 200 living languages (Statista Research Department, 2022). Out of 520 languages spoken in Nigeria, there are three major languages spoken in Nigeria namely Igbo, Yoruba, and Hausa. The official language in Nigeria is English while over 60 million people speak Nigerian pidgin - an English based creole. Igbo is the indigenous language of the Igbo tribe. It is one of the languages in West Africa and is spoken by 18 million people in Nigeria. It belongs to the Benue- Congo group of the Niger-Congo language family and thought to have originated around the 9th century AD in the area near the confluence of the Niger and Benue rivers and then spread over a wide area of southeastern Nigeria (Igbo: language Portal). Statista Research Department further reveals that there are approximately 30 Igbo dialects, some of which are not mutually intelligible. For most parts, the differences are lexical and phonological. It said that these different dialects have hindered the development of a standardized spoken and written Igbo. The standard literary otherwise known as central Igbo is based on the Owerri and Umuahia dialects. This has been in use since 1962. Somehow this is not universally accepted by speakers of other Igbo dialects but is still in use to date. Standard Igbo; sometimes includes words from other Igbo dialects and also loan words from other languages.

Right from the pre-colonial days, the Igbo have never toyed with naming their birthed ones because they believe that names have both psychological and spiritual effects on the bearer. They believe that a name follows the bearer. Igbo names were chiefly stories of the family and could also be related to the circumstances surrounding the birth of the child, past experiences of the family or parents, the market day he/she was born, position of the child in the family, and expectation of the family (Cookey and Ijioma, 2019). They further mention that

one could easily tell the story, the philosophy, and the religion affinity of a family by the names they bear. This study is of the view that perhaps the spiritual and psychological effects of these named fabrics could affect the wearer, since he/she is a human being. However, it has been observed that the manner in which the Igbo name human beings is almost the same way items like African wax printed textiles are named, in that some names of these fabrics also depend on the past experiences of the Igbo, recent occurrences in Igbo land and their worldview. Some of the re-named fabric designs utilized by the Igbo women are placed in the figures below. Some are single worded while some are in sentences. For instance the sample placed in figure 4 named *okuko jeko parti* (means chicken going to a party). This is an everyday occurrence, in that chicken are commonly reared by the Igbo in the places where they live. And they could be found walking and running about looking for what to feed on.



Figure 4: The decolonized name for this design is *okuko jeko parti* (means chicken that are going to a party). The name is suggestive of the design (chicken in motion). Source: Chika Chudi-Duru (2023).



Figure 5-6: A wrapper vendor advertising this design on her Instagram page. The design is known as English gold (yellow and red). It looks like a necklace pendant used by some of the women. The name is based on the value placed on gold jewelries by the Igbo women.

Source: Chika Chudi-Duru (2023).

This study concentrated on how indigenous names have aided the preference of some particular African wax printed textiles as women's uniforms and boosted their sales and utilization in the fashion industry. In figure 6, a group of Igbo women could be found in a cultural dance performance, tying a wax print named *opuna* (Igbo language pronunciation of a drink or can cork opener) as their uniform. To the Igbo traders, any positive happenings in the society that drew some attention deserves to be commemorated with a named wrapper to attract a huge sale, the researcher observed.

Figure 6: A group of Igbo women from Idemili north local government area, Anambra State, Nigeria, in a cultural dance performance, tying a wax- print named *opuna*(opener).
Source: Chika Chudi-Duru (2023).

Textile designs

Textile designs play significant roles in cultural decolonization by serving as vehicles for reclaiming identity, reviving traditional knowledge, and resisting cultural erasure imposed during colonization. During colonial periods, indigenous textile practices, motifs, and materials were often suppressed, appropriated, or replaced with foreign styles and mass-produced imports (Sylvanus, 2007). Colonial authorities and missionaries frequently discouraged traditional dress, associating it with backwardness, while promoting Western clothing as a symbol of “civilization” (Eicher & Sumberg, 1995). As a result, many communities experienced a loss of cultural expression and identity tied to their distinctive textile heritage.

In the process of decolonization, reviving and valuing indigenous textile traditions is a powerful act of cultural resistance and renewal. Through the production and wearing of traditional textiles, communities assert pride in their heritage and reestablish connections with ancestral knowledge, techniques, and aesthetics (Perani & Wolff, 1999). This reclamation often involves the use of indigenous materials, dyes, weaving methods, and symbolic motifs that communicate cultural stories and values unique to the community.

Textiles also become platforms for political expression and solidarity. For example, the adoption of indigenous fabrics like kente in Ghana, adire in Nigeria, or beadwork in Maasai communities serves not only as a fashion choice but also as an affirmation of cultural sovereignty and self-definition (Sylvanus, 2007; Eicher & Sumberg, 1995). By prioritizing local craftsmanship and resisting the dominance of imported textiles, communities disrupt the lingering economic and cultural structures of colonialism. Reclaiming and revitalizing textile traditions is a tangible and symbolic part of cultural decolonization, fostering pride, continuity, and autonomy within formerly colonized societies.

Designs cannot be separated from textiles, since they are one of the keys to attraction and convey some messages (Chudi-Duru, 2017). They could either be woven, appliqued, embroidered, hand painted, printed, dyed or drawn on pieces of fabrics to decorate, identify, differentiate, add more value and also serve other purposes to the wearer, the designer and the admirer. Such designs on the fabrics comprise of motifs which are often arranged in repetitive forms showcasing different patterns. Herald in Chudi-Duru 2017, points out that textile design patterns are non-verbal means of communication found in many cultures used to differentiate, disguise, warm and allure, characterized by elements and principles of design. Kriger in Chudi-Duru 2017 notes that textiles are one of human kind's most important commodities and have a lot to express on the peoples history and societies worldwide. There are Asian, Oriental, African, Chinese, Japanese, Arabian, European, Native American, North American, South American, Ancient Greek textile designs and others. All the designs produced in these areas can be distinguished from one another based on their various motifs and peculiar characteristics including names attributed to each of them.

African traditional textile designs

African textile industry is very old and dates as far back as 5,000BC when ancient Egypt began growing flax and utilizing them to weave linen. Badari, an ancient town found in Egypt, had a depiction of loom showcased on its ancient pottery which dates back to that period. While the tomb of Khnumhotep of the 12th dynasty had an image showing weavers using a horizontal loom (CA 2400 BC) (Dr. Y., 2013). It further reports that the Nubians from Sudan, which are their neighbours also had a flourishing textile industry, these can be seen on images on pyramids at Meroe to mention but a few. It says that later on, several civilizations flourished throughout Africa and cotton became a more commonly used fabric. There was the presence of weavers in the Mali Empire and Timbuktu in the 1300s. Today in Africa, one can find many textiles industries flourishing in many towns. These are either automated or manual, and utilize several techniques to manufacture some fabrics for people's usage. In Africa, there are different techniques utilized in producing African textiles designs which are peculiar to West, South, North, East and Central Africa. Some examples of

prominent indigenous African textiles produced in West Africa are Adinkra calabash stamp printed cloth from Asante of Ghana, kente woven cloth produced by the Ewe and Ashanti people of Ghana, Bogolanfini(mud) cloth- produced by the Bamana and Bambara tribes of Mali, Akwete hand woven broad cloth from the Igbo of Nigeria, nsibidi stitch dyed cloth from the Igbo of Nigeria, Akwa-ocha hand woven cloth from the Delta-Igbo of Nigeria, Aso-oke hand woven strip cloth and Adire indigo cloth from the Yoruba of Nigeria, Kuba shoowa cloth from the kuba of the Democratic republic of congo, Korhogo and Baoule cloth from Ivory Coast, Anger cloth from the Tiv of Middle belt Nigeria, Asafo, appliqued flags from the Fante of Ghana, Bark cloth – Buganda tribe of Uganda, Kanga – Tanzania, Kitenge – Tanzania and other regions of East Africa, Chitenge – produced in Zambia, Shweshwe- South Africa, Ukara – dyed indigo cloth from some parts of Igbo region(Abakaliki, Ohafia, Abiriba and Arochukwu) of Nigeria , Dida raffia cloth from the Dida of the Ivory Coast, Fila dye painted cloth from the Senufo of the Ivory Coast, Saso Dan fani woven cloth from Burkina Faso, Kaasa woolen blanket from the Fulani of Niger Delta Mali, Ndop resist dyed indigo cloth from Bamileke of Cameroon and Capulana loin cloth from Mozambique and so many others (Chudi-Duru, 2017). While the indigenous fabrics mentioned above comfortably belong to the areas that manufacture them, the African wax printed fabrics made in Europe for Africans defy boundaries and are West African in identity (Kudowor, 2012).

African wax- printed textiles-Hollandaise

African wax-printed textiles, commonly known as Hollandaise, are deeply connected to the processes of cultural decolonization in Africa. Although these vibrant fabrics originated from Dutch and Indonesian batik printing techniques, Africans appropriated and indigenized them, transforming Hollandaise into a powerful symbol of identity, resistance, and cultural pride (Sylvanus, 2007).

During the colonial era, European trading companies such as Vlisco introduced wax prints to West African markets. While the origins of these textiles were foreign, African consumers and artisans reinterpreted their meanings, integrating local symbols, motifs, and stories into

the designs. Over time, Hollandaise became embedded in African social life, used in ceremonies, celebrations, and as markers of status and belonging (Perani & Wolff, 1999).

This act of cultural appropriation and reinterpretation reflects a form of decolonization. Africans subverted colonial importations by assigning new values and meanings to the textiles, making them their own. The popularity and prestige of Hollandaise became a way to affirm African aesthetics and agency, challenging the colonial narrative that equated authenticity with European or Western styles (Sylvanus, 2007).

Furthermore, in the post-independence era, the wearing and gifting of wax prints became a conscious expression of national and continental pride. The textiles often feature proverbs, political messages, and commemorative motifs, turning clothing into a medium for social commentary and collective memory (Eicher & Sumberg, 1995). Recent trends also see the rise of African-owned textile companies producing locally designed wax prints, which strengthens economic independence and further disrupts colonial economic legacies.

Re-naming of African wax-printed textiles with indigenous names illustrate how material culture can be reclaimed, reinterpreted, and mobilized as part of cultural decolonization—serving both as a symbol of resistance to colonial influence and as an assertion of African identity and creativity.

There's no gain saying the fact that African wax- printed textiles are not of African descent (Acher, 2016). The origin of African wax-printed textiles can be traced back to the Netherlands, where industrialist Pieter Fentener van Vlissingen began producing imitation batik fabric using new roller printing technology. Initially facing rejection in the Dutch East Indies, the fabric found popularity in the Gold Coast (now Ghana) after Ghanaian soldiers returned home with a taste for it. The fabric continued to gain momentum and has since become a staple in African fashion. The Vlisco Company, previously known as Van Vlissingen, rebranded as Vlisco in 1927 and took measures to safeguard the authenticity of their brand. Today, Vlisco fabrics bear the stamped phrase "guaranteed Dutch Wax Vlisco" on every selvage to uphold their authenticity

Archer emphasizes that the Vlisco Group comprises four distinct brands: Vlisco, Woodin, Uniwax, and GTP, each targeting specific segments of the African marketplace. Vlisco's production process involves 27 precise steps, combining machine and hand techniques rooted in the traditional indigo resist method. The company's diverse team of designers' crafts patterns at its headquarters, contributing to Vlisco's cultural significance beyond fashion. Vlisco is about much more than just the fabric as an object of fashion. The ecosystem and visual language of its trade is a cultural phenomenon in which women entrepreneurs flourish, and individuals can forge and display their identities through designs. Although Vlisco assigns stock numbers to its patterns, traders and buyers have bestowed them with names and narratives in various countries based on their patterns and those names still hold till today (Nnewuihe, 2020). She discloses that African wax print fabrics are made from 100% cotton. Printed onto these fabrics are intricate motifs that are repeated across the length of the fabric.

Research questions

The research questions set to guide this study are as follows:

1. *Why are African-wax printed fabric designs re-named?*
2. *Why are the named African wax-printed textiles preferred as uniforms for different women groups in Igbo land?*
3. *Why are these African wax-printed textile uniforms often utilized in various women group meetings?*
4. *On what occasions do the women use these uniforms?*
5. *In what ways do the given names aid their marketing?*
6. *Who are those that name African wax-printed textiles in Igbo land?*
7. *Why are some African-wax printed textiles admired by the Igbo named in Igbo language?*
8. *Why are the names indigenous?*
9. *What are the indigenous names given to these African wax-printed textiles utilized by the Igbo women?*
10. *What are the samples of those African-wax printed fabrics utilized by the Igbo women as uniforms, their names and meanings?*

Methods

This is qualitative research. The study area was randomly selected from the core Igbo states (Imo, Anambra, Abia, Enugu, and Ebonyi). Participant observation, one on one physical interviews (up to 15 interviews were conducted by the researcher) and photographs were used as research instruments to collect some data. Consents were provided by some women group leaders in various Igbo communities and the lead cloth merchants in *Ogbo abada* market-Anambra, where these fabrics are named. Other markets in Igbo land *Eke Awka* market-Anambra, *Ogbete man market* Enugu, *Ariara* market, Abia, *Eke Onunwa* market- Imo and the main market in Ebonyi State were also visited during this study. The main market where these wrappers are sold and some other markets in Igbo land were visited, some traders, buyers and women leaders from various women groups were interviewed. The indigenous names given to some African wax fabrics were revealed during the interviews by the women interviewed and some merchants of these fabrics. This study also used qualitative analysis for analyzing the data and employed the trickle theory in fashion and theory of adaptation (natural selection) otherwise known as the survival of the fittest.

A picture of a main market known as *Ogbo abada* solely dedicated to the sales of African wax-prints in Onitsha, situated in Anambra State, Nigeria is placed in figure 7. This study observed that there are over a thousand shops that sell different types of African wax prints in this market. This study was conducted from January 2023 to February 2025. This was to enable the researcher get more detailed information on women activities and sales of African wax-prints during the celebrations like Christmas, Easter, New Year and August meetings because many groups celebrate a lot during those festive periods. A view of the *Ogbo abada* textile market in Onitsha, Nigeria is placed below in figure 7.

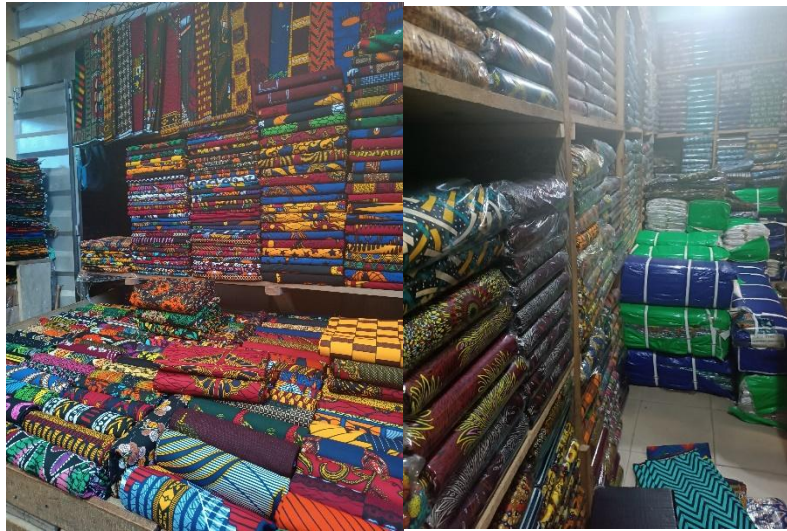


Figure 7: Some African wax-printed fabric shops in *Ogbo abada*, market Onitsha, Nigeria.
Photo credit: Chika Chudi-Duru (2024).

Results and analysis

Result 1 from research question 1

1. Why are African-wax printed fabric designs re-named?

Chudi-Duru (2017) notes that this market boasts of importers, whole sellers and retailers in all types of African wax-printed fabrics. She also perceived that people come from all over the country to purchase some fabrics. It is one of the major African-wax hubs in Nigeria in that there are no types of African printed fabrics that could not be found there. When the customers come to procure some fabrics, the names are provided with the colour of choice, which quickly helps to locate them. This study observed that the baptized names given to these fabrics were able to express in full the phenomenon, which their identification numbers could not offer. These names do not send warnings or negative messages to the onlooker when worn, neither are they used for abusive messages rather they are names that exhume positivity while pointing to the social, religious, economical, spiritual, political, marital aspects of the Igbo women and generally depict recent happenings in the society, presidential visits, women life, newly released music, Igbo culture, religious objects, food items, tools, home appliances, plants, masks, school items, animals, birds, fruits, family live, vegetables, names of cars, chieftaincy garb, jewelries, and others.

Result 2 from research question 2

2. Why are the named African wax-printed textiles preferred as uniforms for different women groups in Igbo land?

This study found out that there are various groups formed by the Igbo women who mostly identify themselves with uniforms in form of African wax-printed fabrics whenever they attend some occasions. In most women meetings in Igbo land, African wax-print uniform is a common thread that unites members. These uniforms are similar clothing worn by a group of particular people. They use those special clothes to show that a group of people belong together.

The researcher found out that every clan, village, and town in Igbo society have two women associations that wield some political (and religious) power and influence, namely *out ụmụada* or *out ụmụọkpụ* and *out nwunyedi*. While the former comprises all women – married, unmarried (but had reached marriageable age), divorced or widowed – who were bona fide daughters of a particular clan village or town, the latter comprises all the wives of their men. These two groups were stronger in handling communal issues before the advent of the white men than they are today. In the pre-colonial times, women were given roles related to home maintenance and child upbringing, the researcher found out that the narrative has changed in that there are some other duties added to these mentioned above which involve acquiring some education and being a working-class or starting up a business no matter how small it might be. The women are now more enlightened and exposed than before. That exposure has affected their worldview including appearances. In that they form groups that help to foster the development of their various communities. Since they are in groups, thus a need for uniforms to symbolize oneness. Some pictures of some women groups adorned in African wax- prints as uniforms found during this study are placed from figures 6-14.



Figure 8: A group of (umuada) bona fide daughters of a particular clan village known as Amawbia in Anambra state, Nigeria, during a burial ceremony. They are wearing their uniform. Source: Chika Chudi-Duru (2023).



Figure 9: A group of *umuada* of a particular clan village known as Amawbia in Anambra state, Nigeria, during a burial ceremony decked in their uniform. Source: Chika Chudi-Duru (2023).



Figure 10: A group of church women organization on their uniform (English gold) during a match past in a state's home and abroad meeting. Source: Chika Chudi-Duru (2023).



Figure 11: A group of women organization on their uniform (off colour) during a match past in a state's home and abroad meeting. Source: Chika Chudi-Duru (2023).



Figure 12: A group of women organization on their uniform named tomatoes during a match past in a state's home and abroad meeting. Source: Chika Chudi-Duru (2023).



Figure 13: A group of church women organization (St. Paul's cathedral Eze-oke, Ehime-Mbano. Imo State, Nigeria) on their uniform (bowtie). A welcome dance during a church synod. Source: Chika Chudi-Duru (2023).



Figure 14: A group of women organization on their uniform (named bullet) during a condolence visit. Source: Chika Chudi-Duru (2023).



Figure 15: A group of *Umuada* from Obolo Ugiri, Isiala- Mbano, Imo State, Nigeria on their uniform (scattered key) during a burial. Source: Chika Chudi-Duru (2023).

There are some other groups formed by the women found during this study aside the aforementioned. They are as follows: groups of friends(clubs), Igbo women from the same state but work in another state, Igbo women that are native of one state and married into another state, different women groups in the church, Igbo women from different local

government areas, different associations of Igbo women found in various institutions, Igbo women married into the same kindred, Igbo women married into the same state but in the diaspora, Igbo women in the diaspora/abroad (not only overseas but any place outside Igbo land), Igbo women dance groups, ceremonial uniforms in their work places and others.

Result 3 from research question 3

3. Why are these African wax-printed textile uniforms often utilized in various women group meetings?

During this research, this study found that these uniforms are distinctive fabric designs worn by the women of a particular group for recognition. By standardizing their dress code, wearing uniforms is seen by them as a way to promote equality in women's meeting and prevent them from being judged based on their clothing, for instance some wealthy women see the meeting as a place for showing off. These uniforms worn by each group brings everyone to the same platform, no matter how rich or poor. It helps to reduce poverty visibility among members. This fact in particular makes some women not to attend their meetings as found out by the researcher during this study as mentioned by one of the interviewee (Mrs Chika Uchegbu). If all the members adorn themselves in one uniform, it will be difficult to separate the poor from the rich as this helps to reduce stigmatization and discrimination faced by the poor members. Those that are not rich enough feel intimidated by some of the members showing off of their wealth in different wrappers each time there's a meeting, because of this some members shy away from attending the meetings. Wearing uniform removes any preconceived ideas about what to wear, allowing for greater group cohesion and commonality.

This study also found out that the uniform dress code create a sense of belonging and camaraderie among the women. It reduces clothing-related conflict and creates a less fashion conscious environment for instance, some women go to the meeting to display different garbs on every meeting day, but the introduction of uniform reduces the financial burden and eliminates the pressure on the women to purchase expensive fashionable clothing to compete with others. For instance due to unhealthy competition in various churches in

Nigeria by some women, the women groups in churches introduced various uniforms to be used during some special church occasions, even some male groups did this too. Uniforms for the women instills a sense of teamwork and create a more inclusive and equal interactive environment. Mrs. Mbelu, an interviewee disclosed that because all members are wearing the same clothes, there are no comparison and judgment. When the women dress in uniforms she mentioned that it enhances their credibility, confidence and self-esteem, increases their focus on pressing issues and concentration instead of checking who wore what and what. She further mentioned that the uniforms also help them to create a sense of cohesion among the members like Mrs. Chika Uchegbu mentioned earlier. Most importantly, she revealed that wearing of uniforms helps them to distinguish their members of different groups from another group and promote team spirit. By wearing similar fabric design, members feel more united with one another, this decreases stress and increases their joy of having one mind. They improves inter-member relationships and instill a sense of pride in group members. Furthermore, she insists that when members wear a uniform, it saves money because there is no need of wasting money in buying clothes to impress other people during an outing. Another finding from her is that it allows members to reuse constantly without the pressure of others' opinions. The study is of the view that groups of women who wear uniform do not have to feel insecure about their appearances and social status. It instils a sense of discipline in group members. It helps them adhere to the rules and regulations in shaping of their group. This study also established from her findings that if a group member does not appear in the groups' uniform, she will be fined a particular amount of money as agreed in their constitution. Wearing of uniforms helped the various group members to identify anyone in their gathering without a uniform as an outsider or possible intruder. To them, when members wear uniforms, they have an easier time getting ready for their meetings and engagements, as there is no need to pick out an outfit. They can thus get dressed more quickly and with less stress. The researcher found out that by establishing the same uniform code for everyone, offensive messages on some clothing, disturbing images on clothes, and other clothing content that might harm their reputations are prohibited. When Igbo women wear their various uniforms, they enable members give themselves distinct styles that everyone

in their community can recognize and appreciate, showcase solidarity, one love, one voice, affiliation, define boundaries, support during ceremonies and other functions in the Igbo society. Some other groups of Igbo women adorned in their uniforms found during this study are placed in figures 16,17, 19, 20, 21 respectively.



Figure 16: A group of women (*nwunyedi*) on their uniform during a visit to a member's family to celebrate a new born baby (ikuputanwa or igu nwa aha). Source: Chika Chudi-Duru (2023).

Result 4 from research question 4

4. On what occasions do they use the uniforms?

The ceremonies they attend wearing their uniforms if invited are celebration of new born babies by a member, chieftaincy title taking, new yam festivals and other cultural festivals, special church programmes, marriage ceremony of a group members' child, burial ceremonies of a member or a members' close relative but not the burial of a much younger person, launching of various community projects, August meetings of various communities (kindred, Church, State and local government areas), award ceremony of a member or

members' spouse, unveiling of a new indigenous dance learnt by the women, launching of a new uniform by the group of women that own it, courtesy visits, political rallies and others.



Figure 17: A group of women organization on their uniform (*Mkpuruoka – seeds of maize*) in a condolence visit dance. Note the white blouse used as the top for the wrapper. In some areas of Igbo land for instance in Awka (Anambra State), if the deceased is below 60 (too young), a black blouse is worn by the women but if the deceased is above that age a white blouse is worn. Source: Chika Chudi-Duru (2023).

Result 5 from research question 5

5. In what ways do the given names aid their marketing?

The designs on the fabrics used as uniforms do not embody the groups' philosophy but play a role in shaping the meeting environment to foster equality and discipline. Mostly the fabric designs do not communicate any particular message to the onlookers. Rather if their designs and names are older ones, they are more appreciated because they are always available in the market. They might not be produced by Vlisco, other companies could be the producers by copying Vlisco designs and flooding the market with them. Most of these companies produce known designs more because they know they are old, known by most people and marketability. Mr David Onwujiuba (an interviewee) disclosed that naming depends on how marketable the fabric design is at first. He is also of the view that the name given attract

more buyers and records huge sales. Once a name is given to a fabric design, and eventually it is chosen as a uniform for a group, many members try as much as possible to procure the uniform as has been agreed by the members during their meeting. Furthermore he mentioned that not only one person is buying the uniform, but all the members of that women group. On the other hand, the newly named fabric design attracts more customers because those that do not have them in their wardrobes always would like to purchase them so as to be in fashion. The older fabric designs with names are always found in the market because their demands are always high- these are the ones usually utilized as uniforms. The researcher revealed that some of the wrappers with names utilized by her mother of 83 years were once utilized by her grand-mother while she was alive. The older named designs are mostly utilized as uniforms by some of the women groups because the merchants mentioned that they are always in demand, have been known by many people and record huge sales, therefore, they in turn never allow them to be scarce in their various shops. Some Chinese companies also produce some of these. This act makes it cheaper for some of the women to purchase since Hollandaise is quite expensive though the rich ones still purchase its products. It has been observed that some women prefer to go for other companies like hightarget products instead of Hollandaise because of the cost. When other companies copy and produce these popular designs seeing their popularity in demand as uniforms for the women, the designs still retain their baptized names. The fabric designs that do not have the basic colours attributed to “Igbo Hollandaise” which are red, royal blue, yellow, black and white are nicknamed “off colour” and most times, no special names are given except the patronage becomes higher. Below on figure 18 is one of the shops in *Ogbo abada* market stocked with Chinese imitation wax prints.



Figure 18: African printed fabrics in a shop in *Ogbo abada market*. Source: Chika Chudi-Duru (2023).

This study found out that during the early 20th century, the Igbo women knowing the quality of African wax-printed textiles (Dutch wax-prints) which is durable, bright, intimidating colours and symbolic designs, venerated them without considering the costs. Some women can save a whole year just to buy one, while the affluent ones could buy many at a time. They adopted those fabric designs as theirs to the extent they are used for uniforms for various women's meetings in August and for attending some special occasions as a group. Women view them as status symbols. They are eager to find out who is tying the latest designs to their monthly meetings, if there is no particular uniform. It was a kind of competition among the women during that time. Some women's meetings have it as a rule to tie double wrappers with a lace blouse while in attendance and nothing less than that. Anything short of these will incur a fine. This study also found out during an interview with Mrs. Bernadine Mbelu, a woman leader in Ogidi, Anambra state, that instead of paying some fine as a result of not appearing in the agreed uniform, most women endeavour to purchase the uniform because the option of being absent from the meeting due to not possessing a uniform will also incur a fine. They prefer to buy the wax-print imitations which are way much cheaper than Dutch wax Hollandaise. Consequently, a huge sale was usually recorded due to the fact that the

women must appear in their agreed uniform. In figure 21 one could find a group of Igbo women in a cultural dance performance, tying a wax- print named *Ocheze* as their uniform.



Figure 19: A group of women (*otu nwunye*) on their uniform *Agada gbachiri uzo* during a condolence visit. Source: Chika Chudi-Duru (2023).



Figure 20: A group of *umuada* on their uniform (star) during a burial ceremony. Source: Chika Chudi-Duru (2023).



Figure 21: A group of Igbo women dance group, tying a wax- print named *ocheze* (the kings'stool) as their uniform. Source: Chika Chudi-Duru (2023).

Result 6 from research question 6

6. Who are those that name African wax-printed textiles in Igbo land?

As mentioned earlier, these African wax-printed fabrics have numbers apportioned to them on their selvages for identification not names but considering the fact they found themselves in a foreign land(Igbo land to be precise) , the Igbo baptism of names becomes necessary. Mr David Onwujiuba(an interviewee) a wholesaler of different types of wax-print fabrics with over 22 years' experience, narrates that once the fabrics reach *Ogbo abada* market, the sales are watched for a while to determine if there is much patronage. If so, two or three major merchants in the market usually assemble to pick an indigenous name suitable for the design. Any name suggested immediately becomes the name of that wrapper from that moment till eternity. Immediately a name is given, it becomes the choice of the consumers, especially the women. Below on figures 22 to 27, are different groups of Igbo women on their uniforms for different occasions.



Figure 22: A group of Igbo women in a community's group meeting, tying a wax- print named "step or Lada to heaven" as their uniform. Source: Chika Chudi-Duru (2023).



Figure 23: A group of Igbo women in a church group meeting, tying a wax- print named "walking stick" as their uniform. Source: Chika Chudi-Duru (2024).

Result 7 from research question 7

7. Why are some African-wax printed textiles admired by the Igbo named in Igbo language?

The researcher affirms that indigenous names given serves as an initiation into the Igbo society as one of theirs. They are not seen as foreign any longer but indigenous garb. Because

African wax-print textiles are market products that need to be sold for profit, the merchandizers had to develop some strategies for display and publicity by giving them Igbo/engiligbo/pidgin/English names so as to carry everyone in the Igbo society along. These names gave those fabrics an Igbo identity and endeared themselves to the Igbo. Interestingly, the Igbo names given to these fabrics have stuck to these fabrics and are still retained out of the shores of Igbo land till date. Mr. David, Mr. Ifeanyi, Mr. Nnajofofor, Mr. I.C.Nwosu and Mr. Joe Anam (interviewees-fabric vendors in Ogbo abada) attested to this statement that before they were born, the Igbo African wax- print merchants gave names to newly introduced design in the market and are still named till date to attract more sales and buyers. They affirmed that some names are over a hundred years old. Once a new wrapper design has been introduced and given an indigenous name, some women set it as a goal to look for some money to purchase it. It was one of the best gifts to offer an Igbo woman, a Hollandaise wrapper that has an indigenous name. Employing the trickle-down fashion theory effect, in marketing these named fabrics, trends are set by individuals of higher socioeconomic status who could afford the expensive newly named fabric, followed by those of lower socioeconomic status who could also purchase the same fabric once the fame dies and the cost drops. Given that there are the special ones known as *"IGBO HOLLANDAISE"*. Note here that not all hollandaise wrappers are utilized by the Igbo woman, most prefer indigenous named hollandaise fabrics for uniforms as found out by the researcher. The characteristics of these wrappers are bright coloured backgrounds of red, golden yellow, white, blue and of recent other bright colours followed suite. Most of which major motif designs are outlined in black for more visibility with some textural effects on the surfaces. In figures 23-28 below, all the uniforms chosen by various groups are bright with the same characteristics. A particular design usually comes in four different coloured backgrounds.

Those that appear in other colours known as off colours are also named once the patronage is high, for instance the wrapper design called jollof rice (in figure 24). This, has been recording huge sales. The researcher establishes that some of the motifs used in African prints are African symbolic motifs, geometric shapes, lines, Arabic scripts, Roman numerals, animal forms, flowers, leaves, seed, musical objects, line drawing of contemporary

objects such as bicycle, cars, television and so on. The designs are grouped into four: Women's life (family, love ,beliefs, housework), town life and what it brings (alphabets, automobile, television, money, power), nature (animals, flower, seed, leaves), rhythms (music, musical instruments). Some African prints are named after the design on the fabrics while some are not. Mr. David mentions that there are over 500 named designs in the market.

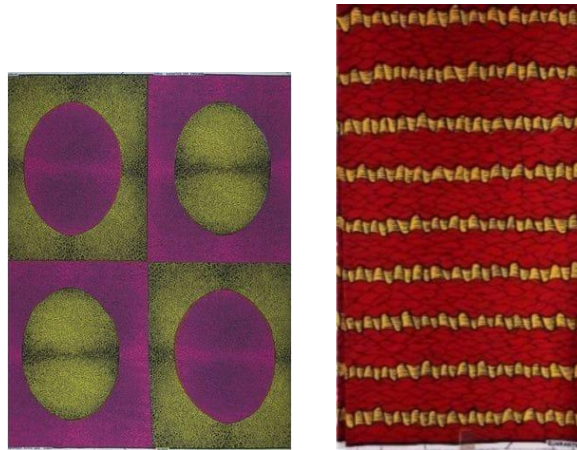


Figure 24: The name of this design is jollof rice. Source: Chika Chudi-Duru (2023).



Figure 25: A group of women (*otu nwunyedi*) on their uniform (sugar cane/ okpete) during a condolence visit. Source: Chika Chudi-Duru (2023).



Figure 26: A group of Igbo women (*otu nwunyedi*) in an occasion, tying a wax- print named *Bibulu* and star as their uniform. Source: Chika Chudi-Duru (2023).

Result 8 from research question 8

8. Why are the names indigenous?

As confirmed by Mr. David, Mr Ifeanyi, Mr. Nnajofofor, Mr. I.C.Nwosu and Mr. Joe Anam (interviewees-fabric vendors in Ogbo abada), the indigenous names given to these fabrics help to aid their sustainability in Igbo land while boosting their marketability. Everyone is being carried along including some elderly women that might not be exposed to foreign languages who adore African wax-printed fabrics.

Employing the theory of adaptation otherwise known as the survival of the fittest by Charles Darwin in this study, African wax printed fabrics have been able to adapt to the African environment then to the Nigerian and to the Igbo environment since the early nineteenth century. Other fabrics competed with them; like the George wrappers, laces, indigenous fabrics, and other imported fabrics, yet, African wax-prints have been able to survive by being amongst the most used fabrics in Igbo land. A clear example could be seen from an interview with an elderly woman of about 75 years, Mrs. Chika Uchegbu, from Ahiazu

Mbaise local government area in Imo state. The interview was motivated by the wax-print she was tying, which she informed some people around her that it was one of her mother's wrappers when she was alive. Mrs. Uchegbu mentioned the names of the wrappers her mother made use of. She also revealed that she liked and admired those that had Igbo names. She normally finds out some names of some wrappers she does not have without even seeing the designs and searches for them in the market. She mentions that mothers of those times were thrilled by the Igbo-named wrappers. They usually refer to the names when sought for rather than the designs on these wrapper. She further mentions that the older the designs the more expensive and valued. She says that the older named designs are never out of stock in the markets rather various women groups keep on using them as uniforms. She also gave some examples with indigenous named Hollandaise and mentioned Bible and star as one of their uniforms. This particular African wax print is placed in figure 26. Their names keep them at the top among other designs. This is to buttress what Vlisco mentioned. Vlisco disclosed that consumers and traders identify their fabrics by assigning them names based on their own associations. It further mentions that a new product launch coincides with a major event which influences the name of a design. It also revealed that the meaning of each Vlisco fabric is open to its wearers interpretation but there are numbers of famous fabrics that have specific meanings in the market - with a story that is passed along from generation to generation. Some families often give names to these fabrics representing memories or meanings of a special nature. Mr. David Onwujiuba revealed that he has named three fabric designs and they are as follows; Obama, madam pass madam and oga pass oga. Another example could be seen from an interview with a middle aged woman in her fifties, Mrs. Bernadine Okore, from Ogidi in Anambra state. She is a woman leader in her hometown. She revealed that their women's African wax uniforms are usually the ones that have names due to the fact that, they are always found in the market at any time. They also believe that the ones that are named are always in vogue. The marketers that supply them with some samples of African wax-print wrappers to choose the ones they prefer, are warned beforehand never to bring the ones that are new with no names. This study also found out that once a fabric is named it becomes a hot cake and more marketable, this was confirmed during an interview

with Mr. Ifeanyi, Mr. Nnajofofor and Mr. Joe Anam (interviewees-fabric merchants) in *Ogbo abada* market.



Figure 27: A group of women organization on their uniform named ABC/ back to school during a visitation. Source: Chika Chudi-Duru (2023).



Figure 28: A group of Igbo women group in Ogidi, Anambra State in Nigeria tying a wax-print named bloks (blocks) as their uniform. Source: Chika Chudi-Duru (2023).

According to Mr. Ifeanyi Nwankwo and Mr. Nonso (interviewees- African wax- print wrapper merchants in *Ogbo Abada* market), any fabric with no name come and go, they are

not steadily replaced when their stock finishes and might be difficult to find but sales of the named ones are not seasonal.



Figure 29: A group of Igbo women from Amawbia, town in Anambra state, Nigeria attending a burial of their king tying a wax- print named opuna and big star as their uniforms. Source: Chika Chudi-Duru (2023).

The study upholds that a newly named fabric in the market is the one in vogue tha. Most buyer's attention are drawn to it. Many merchants stock and re-stock the fabric, it becomes more sought after than the others.

Result 9 from research question 9

9. What are the indigenous names given to these African wax-printed textiles utilized by the Igbo women?

The indigenous names of fabrics listed below as found by this study are known and seen as Igbo Hollandaise.

- 1.kirikiri star(small stars)
- 2.Big star
- 3.kpotuba (let it be heard or seen everywhere)
- 4.Mkpuruoka – seeds of corn
- 5.Obidiya- the heart of her husband
- 6.Agada gbachiri uzo – a pillar

- 7.Ire-eju- snails tongue
- 8.Agu-na-eche-mba/ nwagu tukwu etukwu- the leopard that guides a city
- 9.Oche-eze---King's chair
- 10.Akpirikpazu –scales of fish
- 11.Rula- ruler / onu gbo agidi
- 12.Aka-na -agba-shelltox- the hand that is spraying shelltox(an insecticide)
- 13.Igbara aka bia I lu m- did you come empty handed to marry me?
- 14.Obo nma- the sheath of a knife
- 15.Okosisi- mighty tree
- 16.Ezi-na-ulo- a family
17. Mgbolodi- waterleaf
- 18.Anya- na- ele –uwa- the eye that watches the world
- 19.Mgbawa tomatoes- broken tomatoes
- 20.Faani - fan
- 21.Rekod - record
- 22.Na you biko-is you please
- 23.Ihe olu-necklace
- 24.Mbube - ladder
- 25.Uka 10 – 10 o'clock church service /mass
- 26.Mkpuru suga- cubes of sugar
- 27.Denge - pose- posers
- 28.Abc
- 29.Santana- a brand of car
- 30.Aziza - broom
- 31.Opuna- opener
- 32.Nnukwu azu- big fish
- 33.Oke mmonwu – big masquerade
- 34.Akwu – palm fruit
- 35.Bible na star
- 36.Okemmiri – large water
- 37.Agbara otu – a deity in Igboland
- 38.Ikom popo
- 39.Ncheanwu na shoe – umbrella and shoe
- 40.Enyi nnunnu – large bird
- 41.Nwa key- small keys
42. Jollof rice
- 43.Santana – a car
- 44.Ludo – a game
- 45.udo akpu enyi – a rope can't drag a cow
- 46.Enwe - monkey
- 47.Odu inyinya – tail of a horse
- 48.Granot - groundnut
- 49.Ejula na baibulu – snail and bible

50. Eju na star- snail and star
51. Abuja konekshon
52. Bow tayi
53. Inyinya - jumping horse
54. Nwanyi pink
55. Tee-vee
56. Kabin biskit
57. Okuko je ko party- the chicken that is going to party
58. Udo akpu enyi,
59. Lada- ladder
60. Nnunnu no na cage- a bird that's in the cage
61. Ikiti mmiri – heavy rain
62. Eletriki bulub – electric bulb
63. Suga kane
64. Walking stick/bamboo
65. Okoso
66. Onu na eri aku- wealthy one
67. Abuja express
68. Abuja connection
69. Touching money
70. Seven candles (big)
71. Seven candles (small)
72. Akwukwo ukpaka- oilbean leaf
73. Padlock
74. Sweet mother
75. Razor
76. Concord
77. Me and You
78. Scattered key
79. Coiling
80. Obasi oba
81. Step to heaven
82. Obama
83. Oga pass Oga
84. Madam pass Madam
85. Carpet
86. Aziza board
87. Covid 19
88. Goodluck (named after a former president of Nigeria)
89. Short cake
90. blessed sacrament
91. Azu mbe- tortoise shell
92. Iron gate

- 93.Ego ayoro- cowries
- 94.Aka ngwe
- 95.Burning bush
- 96.Mkpulumma- beauty
- 97.Oriri na onunu- feasting
- 98.Mosque
- 99.National candle
- 100.Udo akpu enyi- a cord cannot drag a cow
- 101.Crayfish
- 102.Azuanuka- the back cannot hear someone talking
- 103.Anya ne ele uwa- the eye that watches the earth
- 104.Anya evi- cows' eye
- 105.Ozigiza
- 106.Telephone to heaven
- 107.Turkey yash
- 108.Nnunu no na cage- a bird in the cage
- 109.Okpulu anyanwu
110. Sienna leaf
111. Water melon
112. Oke mmonwu-big masquerade
113. Kissing bird
114. Egbe belu ugo belu- let the eagle and kite perch at the same time
115. Isi akwu- bunch of palm fruit
116. Aziza- broom
117. Mathset
118. Agwo loro ibe ya- a snake that swallows another
119. Ochieze- kings stool
121. Bullet
- 122.Stainless
- 123.Omaba
- 124.Ogwuazu- fish bone/barbwire
125. World cup
126. Nitel
127. Broken tiles
128. Morning star
129. Scattered key
130. Diamond ring
131. Send down the rain

132. and others

All these mentioned above are used as uniforms from time to time. The women change their uniforms if they are tired of that particular named fabric design or after a number of years to acquire another named wrapper design. And this is usually celebrated on a particular day when the uniform is launched. Friends and well-wishers are invited for the launching of the new uniform. They use this ceremony to raise some fund for the group. More African wax-printed fabrics worn by the women for meetings as uniforms were found and recorded.

Result 10 from research question 10

10. What are the samples of those African-wax printed fabrics utilized by the Igbo women as uniforms, their names and meanings?

Some of the samples found during this study could be viewed from figures 30a – 75. Most of them are produced in four different colour schemes as mentioned earlier.



Figure 30: A name: *Santana*. The name was derived from the name of the car in vogue when the design first hit the market. Source: Chika Chudi-Duru (2023).



Figure 30b:: Name: *ochi eze*. This means fake laughter (camouflage). The design look like set of teeth laughing. Source: Chika Chudi-Duru (2023).



Figure 31: Name: *back to skuul or abc*. This was derived from the designs on the fabric in relation to education. One could see books, black board, ruler, pen, English alphabets, and Arabic numerals as the design motifs. Source: Chika Chudi-Duru (2023).



Figure 32: Name: *obonma* which means knife sheath. Based on the design that looks like knives' sheaths placed opposite each other. The given name was derived from the design.
Source: Chika Chudi-Duru (2023).



Figure 33: Name: *English gold*. The name was derived from the pendant of some jewellerys sold when the design was introduced to the market. Source: Chika Chudi-Duru (2023).

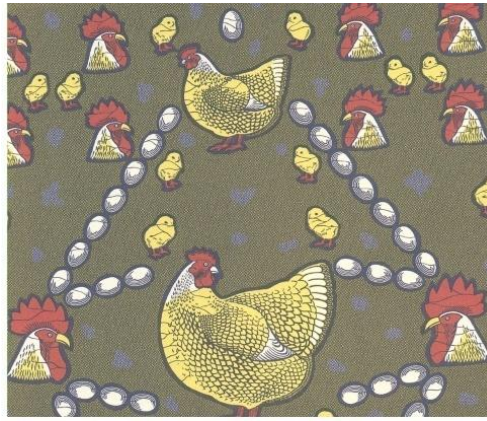


Figure 34: Name: *Ezi na Ulo*- The family. This design comprises of the mother hen, cock and the chicks. The name was derived from the design. Source: Chika Chudi-Duru (2023).



Figure 35: Name: *Mgbolodi*. It means water leaf(vegetable). Source: Chika Chudi-Duru (2023).



Figure 36: Name: *umberela na shoe*, which means umbrella and shoe. The name is derived from the design on the fabric. Source: Chika Chudi-Duru (2023).



Figure 37: Name: *kiri-kiri staa*, which means tiny, tiny stars. The name was derived from the designs on the fabric. Source: Chika Chudi-Duru (2023).



Figure 38: Name: *omaba*. Source: Chika Chudi-Duru (2023).



Figure 39: Aame: *oke-osisi* which means a mighty tree. Source: Chika Chudi-Duru (2023).



Figure 40: Name: *ejula na Baibulu*- yellow. This is an old design but very much still in use to date. The name is derived from the design on the fabric which looks like an abstracted snail and a square- like figure taken as a Bible. Source: Chika Chudi-Duru (2023).

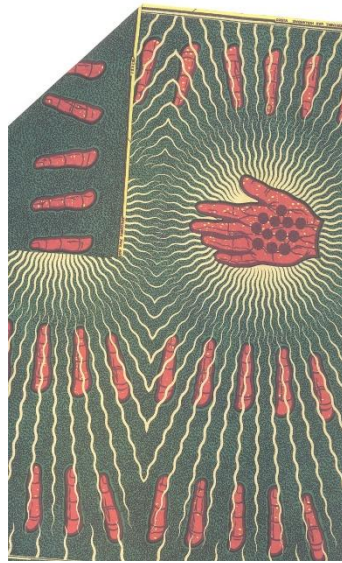


Figure 41: Name: *I gbara aka bia I lu m?* Which means did you come empty handed to ask for my hand in marriage? The name is based on Igbo marriage custom, which sees it as a taboo for a man to come empty handed and ask for a young ladies' hand in marriage.

Source: Chika Chudi-Duru (2023).

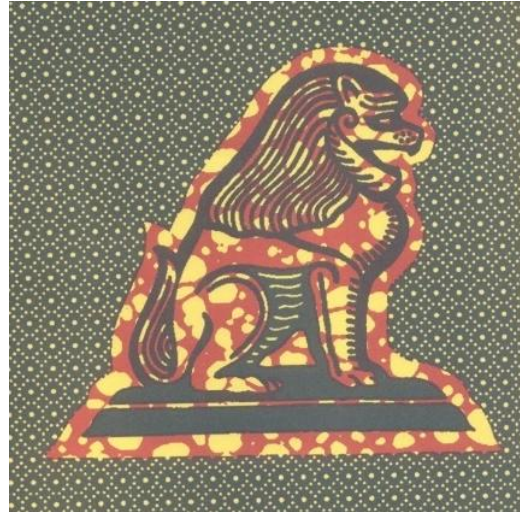


Figure 42: Name: *nwagu* or *agu-na-eche-mba*. Which means the lion that guards the city. The name is derived from the design and also the belief in Igbo philosophy that sees a lion as the king of the jungle. Source: Chika Chudi-Duru (2023).

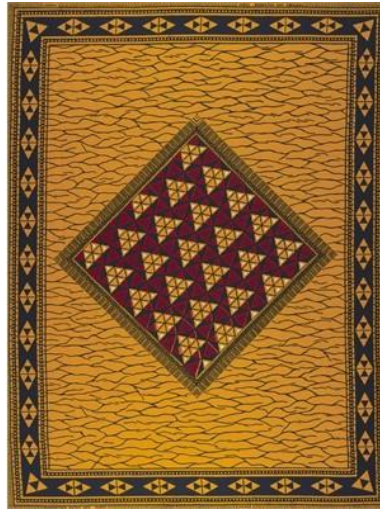


Figure 43: Name: *broken plate*. The name was derived from the breakable plates used in serving food. Source: Chika Chudi-Duru (2023).

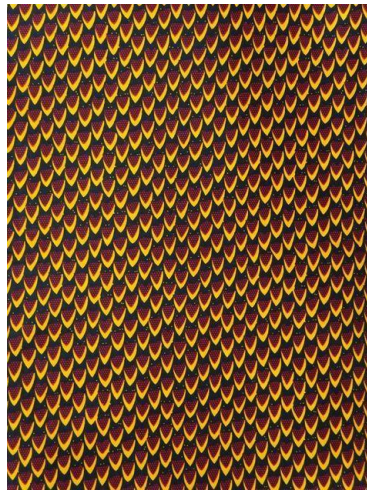


Figure 44: Name: *akpirikpa azu*. This means the scales of a fish. Source: Chika Chudi-Duru (2023).



Figure 45: Name: *heavy rain (ikiti mmiri)*. Source: Chika Chudi-Duru (2023)



Figure 46: Name: *rula* (ruler) or *onugbo agidi*. It is suggestive of the design which is straight lines. Source: Chika Chudi-Duru (2023).



Figure 47: Name: *granut* (groundnut). Source: Chika Chudi-Duru (2023).



Figure 48: Name: *ludo* or *dice-white*. It is a game played by families and friends usually for relaxation. Source: Chika Chudi-Duru (2023).



Figure 49: Name: *tomatoes* derived from the colour of tomatoes. Source: Chika Chudi-Duru (2023).



Figure 49a: Name: *tomatoes* derived from the colour of tomatoes. Source: Chika Chudi-Duru (2023).



Figure 50: Name: *Nnukwu Azu* (big fish). A wealthy man in the community can be described as a big fish. Source: Chika Chudi-Duru (2023).



Figure 51: Name: *jumping horse*, it was named according to what was used as the surface design. Source: Chika Chudi-Duru (2023).



Figure 52: Name: *sweet mother*(red and yellow). Source: Chika Chudi-Duru (2024).



Figure 54: Name: *golden penny*. The name was derived from the golden penny (food brand in Nigeria) company logo which is a look alike with the design on this fabric. Source: Chika Chudi-Duru (2024).



Figure 55: Name: *okoso*. The name is derived from a cone shaped object usually in small sizes used to play some games by children on sand. It is made of plastic and bottle cork. Source: Chika Chudi-Duru (2024).



Figure 56: aNme: *chain*. Source: Chika Chudi-Duru (2024).



Figure 57: Name: *razor blade*. Source: Chika Chudi-Duru (2024).



Figure 59: Name: *step to heaven*. Source: Chika Chudi-Duru (2024).



Figure 60: Name: *akwukwo ugbaka (oilbean leaf) and golden penny*. Source: Chika Chudi-Duru (2024).



Figure 61: Name: *network*. Source: Chika Chudi-Duru (2024).



Figure 62: Name: *shortcake*. Source: Chika Chudi-Duru (2024).



Figure 63: Name: *moon and star*. Source: Chika Chudi-Duru (2024).

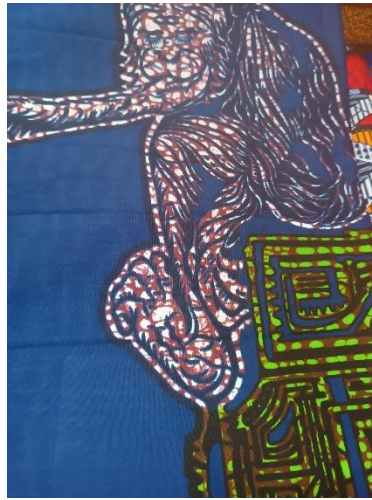


Figure 64: Name: *two monkeys or me and you*. Source: Chika Chudi-Duru (2024).



Figure 65: Name: *padlock*. Source: Chika Chudi-Duru (2024).



Figure 66: Name: *mirror in the sun*. Source: Chika Chudi-Duru (2024).



Figure 67: Name: *necklace*. Source: Chika Chudi-Duru (2024).



Figure 68: Name : *ukwu na aka (leg and hand)*. Source: Chika Chudi-Duru (2024).



Figure 69: Name: *nnunnu no na cage- bird in the cage*. Source: Chika Chudi-Duru (2024).



Figure 70: Name: *seven candles*. The name is derived from the design. Source: Chika Chudi-Duru (2024).

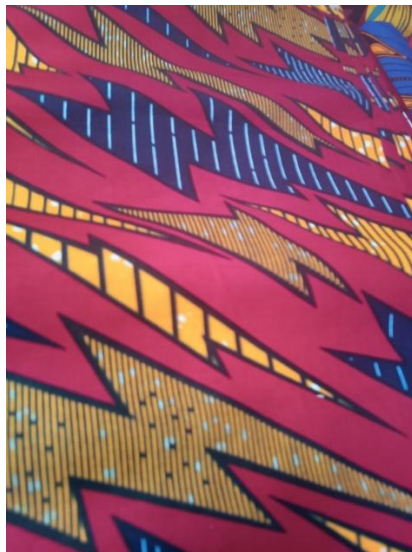


Figure 71: Name: *concorde*. Source: Chika Chudi-Duru (2024).



Figure 72: Name: *table fan*. The name is derived from the design. Source: Chika Chudi-Duru (2024).



Figure 73: Name : *aka na-agba sheltox*. Hand that is spraying sheltox(insecticide)The name is derived from the design. Source: Chika Chudi-Duru (2024).

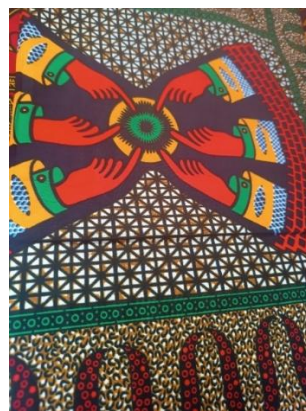


Figure 74: Name: *touching money*. The name is derived from the design. Source: Chika Chudi-Duru (2024).



Figure 75: Name: *broken tiles*. The name is derived from the design. Source: Chika Chudi-Duru (2024).



Figure 76: Name: *four umbrellas*. The name is derived from the design. Source: Chika Chudi-Duru (2024).



Figure 77: Name: *electric bulb*. The name is derived from the design. Source: Chika Chudi-Duru (2024).

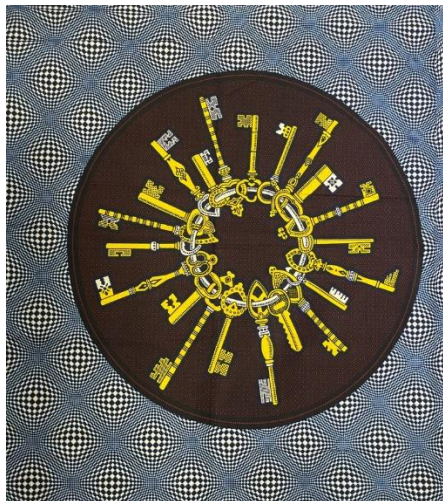


Figure 78: Name: *key to success*. The name is derived from the design. Source: Chika Chudi-Duru (2024).

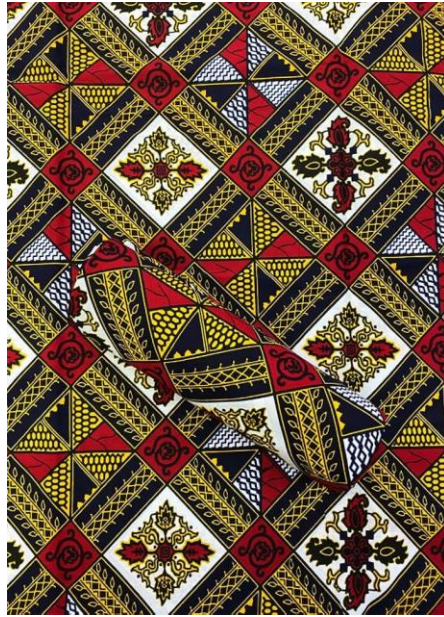


Figure 79: Name: *carpet*. The name is derived from the design. Source: Chika Chudi-Duru (2024).



Figure 80: Name: *covid 19*. The name is derived from the design. Source: Chika Chudi-Duru (2024).



Figure 81: Name: *worldcup/up rangers*. The name is derived from the design. Source: Chika Chudi-Duru (2024).

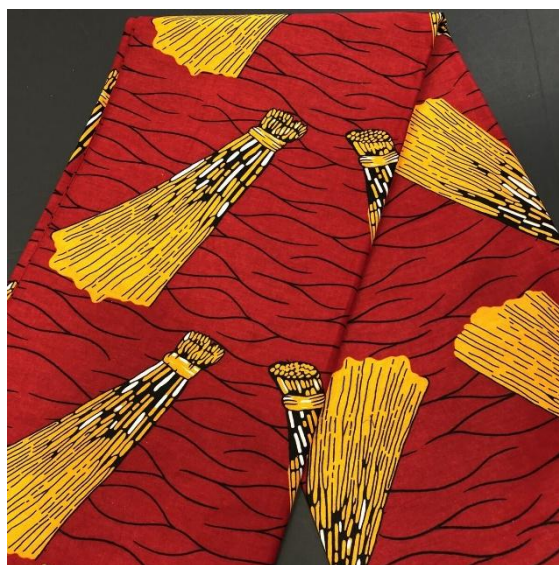


Figure 82: Name: *aziza*. The name is derived from the design. Source: Chika Chudi-Duru (2024).

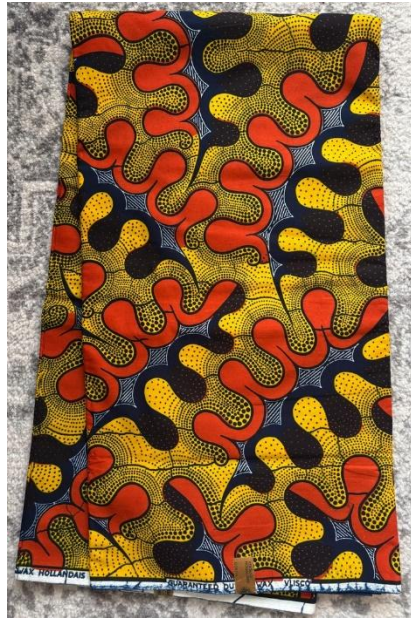


Figure 83: Name: variation of *agadagbachiri uzo*. The name is derived from the design. Source: Chika Chudi-Duru (2024).

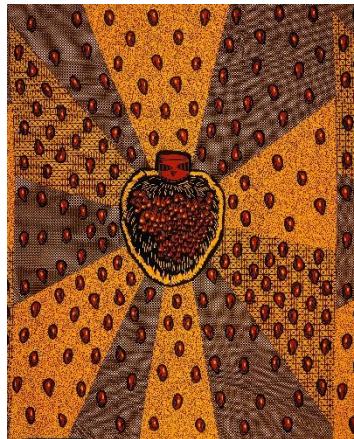


Figure 84: Name: *Isi Nkwu/Akwu*. The name is derived from the design. Source: Chika Chudi-Duru (2024).



Figure 85: Name: anya ehi/anya efi. The name is derived from the design. Source: Chika Chudi-Duru (2024).

Conclusion

The study of cultural decolonization of names and its impact on the preference for African wax-printed textiles as women's group uniforms in South-Eastern Nigeria reveals the profound interconnectedness of identity, culture, and material expression. Through decolonization, their former identities were changed to suit the user's culture where they found themselves. In line with the above, Igbo women are actively participating in a broader movement of cultural revival and empowerment. This study underscores the importance of understanding one's worldview not just as isolated views but as integral components of a dynamic and evolving cultural landscape. The attraction to most Dutch wax prints utilized by the Igbo women is based on the indigenous names given to those fabrics. These names cannot be separated from their designs. Everyone wearing a particular design knows its name. The sales of these fabrics depend on their given names. Those that are nameless are not valued as uniforms and do not record as much sales as the ones that have names. The older ones with names are used quite often by the women as uniforms for different occasions. Even some women who cannot afford Dutch wax prints also go for cheaper China prints with names and designs copied from those of Dutch wax-printed fabrics.

Recommendations

Through the decolonized names of African wax-printed fabrics, the Igbo women have been able to be the ardent consumers of these fabrics. They have also shown some preference and reverence to these fabrics and have taken pride by showcasing their worldview which are cherished as names on these printed fabrics. Through these names, people are able to understand their practices and ways of lives. However, much attention has not been given to this act by producers and scholars as some of these names that aid marketability are mistaken sometimes. This study, therefore, recommends that these names should be continuously recorded for posterity's sake and the story behind their decolonized names told as newer designs and names evolve now and then.

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