
NIGERIA-CHINA TRADE RELATIONS, ITS IMPACT ON SMALL-SCALE BUSINESSES: THE TIE-DYE TEXTILE INDUSTRY PARADIGM

Igbekele, Josephine, Aihie, Joseph
Department of Political Science, University of Benin, Benin City
Email: josephineigbekele35@gmail.com
Email: joseph.aihie@uniben.edu

ABSTRACT

For the wellbeing of citizens and quest for development, countries interact with each other to establish economic relations. This becomes paramount as no nation can survive in isolation. Interacting with countries is beneficial because it brings about development in economic, social, and political needs. For the purpose of rapid development and breaking of barriers that militate against the smooth interactions between nations, hence the widened embrace of globalization. In breaking these barriers through globalization, the small and medium (scale) enterprises especially the tie-dye textile industry have been deprived of the opportunity it can offer so as to improve on the day-to-day living of the citizens. The tie-dye textile designs, which is signature of Nigerian textile, has recently been simulated by the Chinese; thus mass printing and selling it at extremely lower prices, thereby making the locally made tie-dye lose its comparative market value, and at the same time forcing the local producers to be their common salespersons and rendering many jobless. The methods of data used for this paper is the primary and secondary sources. The study evaluates the impact of Nigeria-China trade relations, how the simulating of the tie-dye textile designs by the Chinese has affected the industry. The paper emphasized the trade imbalance between Nigeria and China specially the snatching of the indigenous tie-dye patterns. It was concluded that Nigeria should look inward, revamp the SMEs especially the tie-dye industry because there lies the key to economic development.

Keywords: Globalization, Imperialism, Trade Relations, SMEs, Tie-Dye Simulation

1. INTRODUCTION

As countries aspire to develop and improve on the wellbeing of their citizens, the need to interact and establish economic relations with other countries becomes paramount. Interacting

with countries is beneficial because it brings about development in economic, social, and political needs. For the purpose of rapid development and smooth running of international markets, breaking of barriers that militate against these interactions between nations became necessary. It is in breaking these barriers that the small and medium (scale) enterprises have become more popular and have gained more relevance in the development of society. It is also for the purpose of globalization that Nigeria China trade relations existed. Globalization has become a cankerworm that is eating up, and depriving the less developed countries benefit from its numerous profits. The purpose of globalization is to bring closer integration of the less developed countries into the world economy (Smith, 2003). This reality that many developing countries have been left out of the gains from globalization these past few decades has to be tackled (Okonjo-Eweala, 2022).

Ayoola (2013:98), noted that globalization is the process through which goods and services, capital, people, information, and ideas flow through boundaries and lead to greater integration of economies and societies. It intends to remove all national barriers for the free movement of international capital, as Tandon (1998) posits. The present-day operational system is an extension of the colonial model of exploitation of indigenous people and their resources. These tactics were employed to deindustrialize the indigenous clothing manufacture included the snatching of the indigenous tie-dye designs, and the mass production of brightly colored and cheaper prints (simulated tie-dye), which presented a quicker and cheaper substitute to traditionally designed and handmade local cloth. Due to the prospects, economic value, and unique designs of the Nigerian tie-dye textiles in the globe, China, in order to benefit from its rich economic prospect, simulate the tie-dye designs and flooded the Nigerian market with their own cheap and counterfeit adire products.

Small and medium scale enterprises are the bedrock of economic development of any nation. Keskin, Senturk, Sungur and Kiris (2010:183), opine that they are seen as the main actors of both national and regional development in many countries. Many countries implement support for SMEs through various policies and programmes. Therefore, any country that intends to develop will prioritize job creation, economic growth, and social cohesion. The importance of the SMEs is well recognized all over the world due to its significant contributions to achieving various socio-economic purposes, such as promotion of exports, improve growth of employment and fostering small and medium businesses.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

In the colonial period, Nigeria has no relation with any communist nation, which China also practiced. Nwachukwu (2017:127) noted FunmilayoKuti attended meetings in Beijing and Berlin secretly in the 1950s but was denied renewal of her passport for alleging it was communist linked. He added that the Nigerian trade union leaders who attended conferences and workshops and Nigerian students, who want to study through scholarships from undisclosed sources to study in those countries, had to be smuggled out through Ghana. Momoh (2009) in Nwachukwu (2017) observed that the act of seeing the communist as a taboo and not to be associated with, took a different dimension when TafawaBalewa, the then Prime Minister, in a policy statement where he states that “we shall, of course endeavour to remain in friendly terms with every nation which promises and respects our sovereignty...”. However, Nigeria and officially established diplomatic relation with China after Nigeria and other African countries voted and recognized China as a major World Power (UN Security Council) on 25th of October, 1971 (Nwachukwu, 2017).

The cordial relationship between Nigeria and China did not come on the platter of gold as Osoba (1988:27) noted that once upon a time in Nigeria, books, publications and pamphlets were banned in Nigeria by Mr. A. M. Muir (the acting deputy to the Council Minister) in order to eliminate the communist propaganda. In addition, Osoba (1988) in Nwachukwu (2017:130) observed that in 1957 the colonial Chief Secretary, in the Federal House of Representatives announced the withholding of travel documents and passports from citizens who intends to travel to countries behind the Iron Curtains without any cogent reason. The Iron Curtains is referred to the communist, which includes China. Owoeye in Nwachukwu (2017:130) noted that, despite these challenges faced by the country, pro Chinese sentiments continued to exist in Nigeria.

In the discipline of international relations, trade relations is an important tool for positive relations between nation states in the international arena and ensure states experience improve economic growth and development to enable them participate in the global economy (Osimenand Micah, 2022). This is obvious in the bilateral relations between Nigeria and China, as their diplomatic relations was formally established on February 10, 1971. The relation of the two nations was based on their economic interests. China is benefitting from Nigeria’s rich oil mineral resources, which it needs to power her economy. Nigeria on the other hand is benefitting

from China's investment in Nigeria in terms of infrastructure, technology, hydropower and agriculture (Osimen and Micah, 2022).

During the era of Deng Xiaoping, China adopted an “opening-up” foreign policy. This foreign policy made China seek for deliberate associates overseas that would consolidate international cooperation that will boost its participation in the globalization process. It is in pursuit of the objective of this foreign policy that China and Nigeria assented to the joint communiqué on the Establishment of Diplomatic Political and Economic relations in 1971 (Ocholi and Okonkwo, 2022).

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Due to the ambiguity of interactions amongst sovereign states in trade relations, two approaches were adopted in the analysis. First, the theory of imperialism, which maintains that globalization, is a new form of imperialism by which advanced capitalist countries dispose the developing countries of their economies to guarantee their continuous state of underdevelopment. Toyo (2000) in Eneji, Iwayanwu, Kennedy and Rong (2020:131), states that not only did each competitor have to look for markets and sources of raw materials; it had to jealously guard these against any encroachment by other capitalist fortune hunters. Secondly, the theory which the paper will also hinge on is the dependency theory, as propounded by the works of V. I. Lenin. Dependency theory builds on Lenin's theory of accumulation but goes beyond it to account for changes that have occurred since Lenin first wrote his Marxist interpretation of Capitalism as a cause of inequality and domination (Kegley, 2007:145) as cited in (Rindap, 2015:20). Adding further, “these scholars have defined dependency as a situation in which accumulation of capital cannot sustain itself internally”.

Samuel and Ogbonna (2022:90), opine that dependency theory has the suggestion that market interdependence promotes peaceful relations between states in the international space and increases a high level of trade and investment. They also went further to state that in the process of mutual beneficial exchange, people gain, and the problems of capitalism-boom and bust cycles, trade war, poverty, and inequality and unemployment can be resolved. In the case of Nigeria, much has not been achieved because, China still stands tall and occupies the local tie-dye textile space in Nigeria. Dependency is the inability of a particular weak economic country to meet all her needs without the help of the strong economic country. In the words of Opusunju, Akyuz and

Inim (2000:15), dependency is a condition in which the economy of a certain country is conditioned by the expansion and development of another economy to which the former is subjected. Furthermore, Emeh (2013:1), states that “dependency implies a situation in which a particular country or region relies on another for support for survival and growth”.

3.1 THE NIGHTMARE OF THE INDIGENOUS TIE-DYE (ADIRE, RINI) PRODUCERS

As an SME, tie-dye industry contributes immensely to the development of Nigeria’s economy. The domineering nature of China and its lopsided relations that has ran to a huge trade imbalance in her favour has also posed threat on the small and medium enterprise in Nigeria especially the tie-dye industry. However, the simulation of the indigenous tie-dye patterns by the Chinese and in turn, flooding the Nigerian markets with the same that has rendered the local producers jobless, the negative impact it has on the small and medium businesses in particular and the economy of Nigeria in general, was not put into consideration. It has therefore becomes crucial to evaluate the issues stated above.

Tie-dye is most popular textile amongst the Yoruba people of Western Nigeria, and the Hausa people in the Northern part of the country. In these cultures, the fabric is known as Adire, and Rini respectively. Cloth dyeing is scattered across the western and the northern parts of Nigeria and are known by different names across the diverse ethnic groups (Young, Samah, Rosnon and Singh, 2021:2178). These areas include Kano, Abeokuta, Kwara, Taraba, Osogbo, Maiduguri, Ibadan, Oyo and Zaria. The people of Egba in Abeokuta, Ogun State have a good standing in the production of tie-dye. It has also been the major occupation of the people of that area since the 19th century (Ajayi, 2023).

Spring (2012:34) noted that it is impossible to discuss tie-dye without acknowledging the importance of international, long-distance and local trade. Trade in this concept is the exchange of commodity or to give in exchange for another commodity; in other words, giving what one has to get what one does not have. Long before the introduction of money as legal tender for payment of goods and services, trade by barter was the system used as a means of exchange. In this system, if someone is in need of something but has another thing to give, they would find someone who has the item desired while requiring the item being offered. Trade is defined as the buying and selling of commodities; an exchange of one thing for another (The American Heritage Dictionary, 1992).

Tie-dye as defined by Zakaree (2013:11), is an indigo dyed cloth that originated from Egba in Abeokuta, which is an integral part of the culture and cultural heritage of the people of Egba kingdom in south western Nigeria. Lasis, Oligbinde, Akinyemi and Adetona (2022:232), viewed tie-dye as a colour designed material, which is the oldest way of dyeing textile material that originated from the Western part of Nigeria. Tie-dye making is largely a family business, which involves indigenous plant dyes to make cloths with patterns, motifs and symbols that represent the community's everyday activities, religions belief and social hierarchy (Owen, 2008).

Many people around the world have been fascinated by the designs and combination of colours of the Nigerian tie-dye fabrics and the fabric will continue to exist and excel as long as there is market for it (Gillow, 2009). He also notes that the Kano indigo-dye fabrics are so unique that it is among the most expensive textile in the world and that the Yoruba speaking people are the masters of tie-dyeing process and the most varied method of application. He also maintained that the northern Nigeria tie-dye cloths are sometimes similar to the ones produced in the western part of Nigeria, and that the standard should be maintained so as the uniqueness be protected for the foreseeable future. Similarly, Dendel (1974:124) noted that the design inspirations of the Nigerian tie-dye are endless and worthy of long study. Kamsu (2020) observed that the dye pits in Kano, Nigeria is said to be the oldest in Africa (existed for over five centuries) and that the Tuareg of Mali known as "the Blue Men of the Desert" (named after their blue linen) patronized the Kofar Mata dye pits for their fabrics. The Kano indigo-dye fabrics are so unique that it is among the most expensive textile in the world and that the Yoruba speaking people are the masters of tie-dyeing process and the most varied method of application (Gillow, 2009).

3.2 ORIGIN

Since tie-dye (adire/rini) is identified with Nigerians, it is important to trace back its origin. Oyeniyi (2023:116) noted that the Yoruba people only knew tie-dye (adire) in the nineteenth century during the colonial rule. Ezema (n.d:82) buttressed the fact that adire is associated with the Yoruba speaking people since about 100 years ago. If adire was introduced to Nigeria only in the nineteenth century, it cannot be said to be a Nigerian signature. But contrary to the initial researchers, Areo and Kalilu (2013), Spring (2012) and Clarke (2002)

affirm that adire originated from Yoruba land, considering the facts that archaeologist discovered a cap and some samples made of adire in some burial caves of Mali dating back to the eleventh century. Areo et al., (2013:352) added that the existence of adire has been traced back to many centuries ago even as far back as before the arrival of European travellers. The Yoruba speaking people are the masters of tie-dye process and the most varied methods of application (Gillow, 2009). Spring (2012:12) argued that during the era of slavery, millions of Africans migrated to Americas, Caribbean and other parts of the world with their traditions, skills amongst others that include the tie-dye technique.

Similarly, Young et al., (2021:2178) noted that the origin of dyeing, locally refer to as rini by the Hausa people is as old as the history of Kano, and that Kano has been in existing since 320-380AD long before the discovery of thermoluminescent iron smelting. Dyeing in Kano has been in existence for the past 500years(Asiri, 2015). In addition, one of the first European explorers to Nigeria, Heinrich Barth, wrote a letter home, announced buying his first patterned (rini) shirt in Kano (Mark, 2013).



Figure 1: Display of Indigenous Tie-Dye Fabrics from Abeokuta and Kano
Source: Researcher, 2023

In appreciation of the unique nature of these fabrics, Gillow (2009:68) maintained that no matter how one tries to imitate the Nigerian tie-dye, it could not be compared with the unique and outstanding originals. He concluded also that Nigerians cannot be surpassed in the production of tie-dye.

3.3 MATTERS ARISING

One can agree that the bilateral relationship with these two countries (Nigeria and China) is improving daily unlike what it was during the pre and post-colonial period. However, one begin to get worried on the way the Chinese has flooded the Nigerian markets with substandard, fake, and cheap goods especially the simulated tie-dye (adire/rini) textile thereby strangulating the competitiveness of local production, as a result, crippling the economy of the country and denying Nigerians the economic benefits that is associated with the indigenous tie-dye skills. Adeleye (2023) a tie-dye producer, buttressed the fact that the local tie-dye producers have been contending with the Chinese influx of the counterfeit simulated prints for the past three years. China took the advantage of its advanced technology, cheap and surplus labour to weaken Nigeria's textile industry by simulating Nigerian tie-dye patterns, mass print and influx it back into the Nigerian market thereby creating negative impact on the tie-dye industry in Nigeria.

Eneji et al (2020:136), corroborated the fact that China takes advantages of its sophisticated infrastructure, surplus capital, cheap and surplus labour, textile innovation to export cheaper African prints, creating net negative impact on Nigeria, and in effect have forced the local industries to close. It is pertinent to state here that these rapid increase of the Chinese simulated prints into Nigeria is to the detriment to the survival of tie-dye production in Nigeria. If appropriate actions are not taken to revamp the survival of the tie-dye industry, the upcoming generation, if told of the indigenous tie-dye designs, it is the Chinese simulated fabric that will come to mind. Toye (2021:57) emphasized that the Chinese took these concepts they stole from Nigeria to their factories; produce these stolen designs and import it back to the Nigerian markets. He continued by noting that these action have led the people into frustration, and the frustration has metamorphosed into ethnic and religious differences between the citizens, banditry, kidnapping, armed robbery, and other antisocial activities. Even if the government intends to revive and improve the productivity of the SMEs in the country, the level of influx into the Nigerian markets, especially from the Chinese, may hinder its survival.

Trade, as earlier mentioned, is the exchange of commodity or to give in exchange for another commodity; in other words, giving what one has to get what one does not have; trade, apart from the buying and selling of commodities; it an exchange of one thing for another. However, in the case of Nigeria and China(in the area of tie-dye), the above definition is not applicable. This is so because; Nigerians are the originators of these particular unique designs. These designs have their historical meanings and interpretations. The Chinese went ahead to take

the samples of these designs to their country, mass print them (using technology) and bring same to the Nigerian markets for the Nigerians to buy at a very low cost compared to the indigenous (tedious) ones.

If the Chinese had simulated these stolen patterns and take it elsewhere to sell, it would have been a different issue. But flooding the same to the Nigerian market have affected the small businesses thereby killing the once blossomed industry that has contributed immensely to the development of the economy. The Chinese are not only taking food out of the Nigerian citizens table, but taking the culture, identity, heritage and the future of the country away.

Similarly, on the 13th of May 2015, Kano residents, especially the MasuRini (tie-dye makers) took their protest to the Emir of Kano, demanding that government should stop the influx of their simulated designs by the Chinese into the markets. The secretary of MasuRini, Lawal Yakubu noted that soon, the Chinese will render over thirty thousand dyers and traders jobless because of the overwhelming number of simulated rini that has outnumbered their own original rini production. He further mentioned that on a daily basis, loads of trucks offload these materials into the markets (Guardian online news, 2015). Already, there is a huge threat on the people's source of livelihood.

There is this common saying that "not all that glitters are gold". In comparison of these two fabrics (locally made and Chinese made), those that don't know the difference will go for the Chinese products because of its glossary. The indigenous tie-dye is more body friendly because it hundred percent cotton while the Chinese made is with polyester which is not too suitable for the Nigerian weather.

3.4 SAMPLES OF SOME INDIGENOUS TIE-DYE AND THE SIMULATED PRINT PATTERNS



Figure2: Original Tie-dye with Cotton fabrics



Figure 3:The Simulated Polyester Chinese Prints



Figure 4: Original Tie-dye with Cotton fabric
Source: Researcher, 2023



Figure 5: The Simulated Polyester Chinese Prints

Some other Simulated Designs



Figure 6: Other Unique Designs Simulated by the Chinese
Source: Researcher, 2023

Note that these are some design samples simulated by the Chinese. For every design that is locally available, there is the simulated pattern also.

As earlier stated, in human hierarchy of needs, clothing comes second after food; this is to emphasize how clothing is important to man. If any individual goes about without clothe, it means that individual is insane. Atkins (2017), noted that “clothes make the man. Naked people have little or no influence on the society”. Clothing has been described as a basic need of life that is demanded all over the world (Soaga and Opeolu, 2009). Culture refers to the features of a particular group of people about their language, social habit, religion, food, way of dressing and so on. The Nigerian tie-dye designs display the rich and unique cultural heritage of the Nigerian people. The indigenous tie-dye has unique artistic designs that are attractive. No wonder AmakaOsakwe (also known as Maki Oh) dressed Mitchell Obama and many international figures with the indigenous tie-dye design fabrics.



Michelle Obama Wearing the Nigerian Tie-Dye Designed Dress
Source: <https://www.stylevore.com>

Since Nigeria and China diplomatic relation has been sustained with the initial belief that it would bring about development in the areas of economic, social and political needs of both countries; rather it has jeopardized the small-scale businesses, which are supposed to be the bedrocks of the Nigerian economic development. It should be noted that the Chinese will not fix Nigeria’s negligence; because China knows that Africa generally, and Nigeria in particular is like an orphan or are seen as a house without protection. Rather, Nigerians should look inwards to fixing her problems as suggested by Okonjo-Iweala (2022) that empowering citizens economically through decent jobs (like the SMEs and adire textile production in particular) could lead to increased economic growth, global development, and improved and increase its Gross Domestic Product (GDP). She also added that these businesses (SMSs) they (the citizens) run, serves as the driver of economy-wide growth in the counties that most urgently need it.

The deliberate simulation of Nigerian indigenous tie-dye textile designs by the Chinese to her advantage, has made the local producers of tie-dye textiles to lose its economic value, adding to the problems of unemployment in the country thereby turning the supposed great manufacturers to great importers and common sales person for their stolen designs, fake and substandard printed tie-dye materials. This action has deprived Nigeria the reinvestment of the surplus that is associated with the tie-dye industry. Instead, the accumulated surplus are kept in China for further investment and reinvestment. Concisely, Nigeria is denied access to her own surplus. It is obvious that the Chinese are harvesting quite a fortune to the detriment of the Nigerians.

4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Globalization, in itself is not for destroying any economy for the other, but Africa's economy seems not to be prepared for that kind of system. Since the acceptance of the open door policy, Nigerians keep struggling with the level of influx of items into its market especially the simulated version of her traditional textile designs by the Chinese for their advantage and against economic development of the SMEs in Nigeria especially the tie-dye industry. One is not suggesting a total lockdown of the bilateral relationship with China, Nigeria should be cautious and monitor the way it goes about with her bilateral relationship with its counterparts especially the Chinese. Some scholars believe that Nigeria has benefited much from China and should be given more opportunity to explore the country for development while others are of the opinion of regulating their activities so that the Nigerian economy will not collapse totally.

Introducing technology directly into the production of tie-dye will erode the indigenousness of the fabrics. The producers should develop methods to make tie-dye production easier so as to attract more people into the business. The improved methods and processes of the tie-dye production should not be far from the original design process so that the younger generation will know and have the experience of the original methods used in the production of these fabrics. Where technology will be needed, is in the "mother textile industry" that will produce textile materials used and suitable for the tie-dye production instead of importing foreign textiles for the production.

In addition, the governments at all levels should encourage civil servants to wear tie-dye at least, once a week to their offices. The governments, especially the states that produce these

fabrics to educate the people, through the social media, newspapers, and talk shows on the difference between the homemade tie-dye and the simulated Chinese tie-dye so that when these things are put in place, China will not be the one reaping its benefits. Also, the government of the Federal Republic of Nigeria should look into her international policies and take some actions to prevent further collapsing of the industry. Banning foreign textiles, especially the simulated tie-dye fabric should be welcomed.

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