

Theatre Practice in Nigeria: Sourcing Native Materials for Make-Up Design: An Alternative to Exotic Products

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Abstract

Make-up design is one of the key components in the unique experience associated with performances and vital tool for theatrical productions, film-making, social celebrations, festival and cultural promotion. However, it is no news that most make-up design products used in Nigeria rely largely on exotic products for obvious reasons that can be handled locally. This paper seeks to establish the fact that the raw materials for make-up products to meet the required international standard are readily available in Nigeria that can be tapped, processed and refined for use as an alternative to the imported foreign products – that are scarce, expensive and often alien to local theatrical and film productions. The paper is based on qualitative research method, relying on participant observation and in-depth professional knowledge. The study recommends experimental research to be carried out in this regard which will involve scientific procedure and laboratory tests on the available local raw materials in order to facilitate the production of make-up products with global specifications. The outcome serves as part of roadmap to alternatives and possible replacement to the non-native make-up products flooding the Nigerian markets that will be accessible, available and affordable; and by extension be of advantage to the Nigerian economy in terms of revenue generation.

Key words: Make-up designs, exotic products, film making, experimental research.

Introduction

In contemporary global economy, there is advocacy for self-reliance and dependency on local raw material for refining of finished products and hence the focus on innovations with comparative advantage by every nation for services guarantee and efficiency. Scholars have over time expressed dismay that several decades after political independence, most of African states still rely on exotic taste at the expense of local content thereby continuing to wallow in underdevelopment, especially technologically and industrially. David Udoinwang and Chinenye Amonyze thus aver that “The continued failure of African states to confront the technological and intellectual challenge of the age, over half a century after independence requires critical investigation and radical introspection” (160). Such imperative informs the quest for this paper. This advocacy for self-dependency applies to Nigeria in different aspects of life including the entertainment industry where vital materials are needed for various genres of performances including film, theatre, carnival and festival productions. From the aforementioned, make-up design is a very vital component, without which such productions cannot be aesthetically achieved or appreciated. The point remains that the products for various make-up designs for many aspects of these productions are often available through the international markets where they are imported before they can be available for use in Nigeria. The latter situation leads to a situation that the imported make-up products become so expensive to the point that many artistic productions are of substandard quality because of the inability to meet up with

the financial demands. Most times, these exotic make-up products are scarce in the market because of demands exceeding supplies.

The question arises: why do make-up artists in Nigeria go for exotic products in making up performers rather than using the native cosmetic material that are available and can also serve the same purposes? The answer is that there is a prevalence of believability that the products that come from outside the shores of Nigeria are superior and better than the ones within the country. It is pertinent to state the obvious from the perspective of the researcher's professional knowledge and experience that there is always that impression that locally sourced of make –u materials in Nigeria have adverse and negative effects on the skin – which of course is subject to investigation. However, the perception of the foregoing, calls for another question: is there any possibility for a solution to be proffered as an alternative to the preference for exotic make-up products?

In response to the above question, this study answers in the affirmative. Affirmative in the sense that Nigeria is endowed with a wide range of local raw materials that if properly harnessed, can be refined to comfortably compete with the existing exotic make-up products inundating the Nigerian cosmetics markets. Suffice it to say that this feat cannot be achieved without proactive efforts and concrete steps taken, to engage both the make-up artists as well as the laboratory and scientific experts that are enthusiastically passionate, in the process of harnessing the native raw materials and resources to ensure a parallel alternative to the exotic make-up products.

Overview of Make-up Design

Francis Hodge defines make-up as “the appropriate application of colour on actor's skin with the intention of exaggerating the facial features in order to make him appear specific and emphatic” (261). Make-up is simply the application of cosmetics to the face and body of a performer for appearance enhancement: it aids the audience's insight into the character's age, social status, occupation, period and other identifications. The use of cosmetic materials and colourations to enhance one's look dates back to many centuries when people decorated themselves with locally-made materials – a practice that has been modernized to suit the modern and dynamic contemporary society. However, what matters presently is the function of make-up in enhancing believability in any performance. In a theatrical performance as well as in film productions, make-up involves the use of creative imagination to physicalise the world of such production on the body of the performer which may be either to beautify, to convince or to characterize. To realize the values and functions of make-up, there are two major types of make-up to be considered; straight make-up and character make-up. According to Oscar Brockett:

Straight make-up utilizes the actor's own basic characteristics ... A character make-up is one that markedly changes the actor's own appearance. The change may be in age, or it may involve making the actor seem fatter or coarser, mere lean and widened, or it may emphasize more distinctive facial features ... (359)

For obvious interpretative reasons as asserted by Oscar Brockett, a make-up artist is always a creative personality with regards to any production that has to do with theatre and most especially in the aspect of characterization. This helps to complement the actions on stage. Francis Hodge identifies two functions of make-up as “to make an assisting statement of an actor's characterization and to counter – balance the effects of other elements of design in theatrical production” as well as “provides audience with its primitive

visual idea of a character, the frame of reference from which dramatic actions emerge” (259). It is however pertinent to observe here that make-up complements costume with the synergy to emphasize costume and make-up values and functions in aesthetic realization. Straight make-up aims at drawing a performer's face to suit his/her role, heightening and improving the performer's appearance, without altering the appearance. It retains the performer's natural appearance before the audience and enhances beauty. But character make-up serves among others the basic functions of characterizing the performer, distinguishing and distorting, changing and altering the performer's appearance - producing an artistically created character.

Make-up remains one of the most fundamental visual elements of performance and vital tool in all creative productions that involve. Make-up designs enhance cultural aesthetics, artistic style and tradition. However, the word 'aesthetics' is a relative term based on perception as the saying goes that “beauty is in the eyes of the beholder”. In a general sense, it should be correct to say that it is an articulated value concept and relative experience in nature, arts and human experiences.

Make-up remains one of the most fundamental visual elements in performance. This element can be traced to the origin of the arts of the theatre in Ancient Greece with the dramatic rituals which the Greeks enacted both as a form of entertainment and as a tool for social celebration as well as an avenue for cultural communication and promotion. From their practical record and origin as stated above, it could be submitted that the art of make-up, first emanated from the dramatic rituals of the earliest men, from whence they evolved into being one of the most visually instructive elements of theatre, and whose concept is utilized for film and other artistic productions.

Make-up, as visual designed element in performance is vibrant artistic tool for expression and cannot be appreciated if there is no performance. Naturally, make-up design presents various cultures by giving life and meaning to any performance. Therefore, make-up should be employed in theatre and film productions by utilizing local or native raw materials to support local industries, generate employment, inspire cultural development, promote and communicate the spirit of ethnicity and nationalism.

Make-up aids the performer to assume the role played convincingly. The elaborate nature of make-up helps in striking a balance with whom and what the performer is depicting. Also, in the absence of dialogue, make-up gives adequate information to the viewing audience. However, make-up artists have the task of creating beautiful imperative designs that will transform performers into characters in order to provide a smooth communication process which will help to transmit information from the performer to the audience, especially since make-up design is not functioning simply to exaggerate.

Misconception of Native Materials for Make-up Design

One of the negative impacts of Western civilization on the African society is the attempt to debase, distort and destroy the entire fabric of African products in the global sphere. This unfortunate development has resulted in misunderstanding and the undermining the potentiality of native materials for make-up designs. Theatre and film productions can be achieved through supporting and encouraging the full utilization of make-up to enhance visual appearance in arts as regards to performance, display and other artistic exhibitions. It can be observed that there is that tradition in the Nigerian system when it has to do with anything that is being imported into Nigeria. Preference is given to exotic goods and products than those from the Nigerian soil. This perception adversely affect make-up products in Nigeria, as excessive patronage is tilted toward foreign

products, not minding the level or condition of the products provided the brand has a foreign origin and source.

This misconception may be borne on the impression or the premise that 'everything made in Nigeria is either fake or imitation'. Although much of these unproven misconceptions may be true as a result of high rate piracy and associated crimes in Nigeria, the fact remains that this misconception can be tackled if only the local products are tested and trusted with conformity with global standard as required.

Prospective Native Materials for Make-up Design: An Alternative for Exotic Products

The purpose of finding alternative for make-up design products through native materials in Nigerian local content which is the focus of this study is to highlight the potential values of available raw materials grown and found in the Nigerian environment. In addition to this, Vermaak asserts that “developing cosmetics derived from African seeds, herbs and oil are extremely attractive to international companies as it has strong marketing potentials” (930). Ribeiro Stam supports that “natural plant extracts either from plants that occur in nature or wastes from plants processed industrially can be used to obtain new natural topical antioxidants, lighteners and preservatives, maximizing the utility of products currently underexploited and discarded” (201).

Justifying the position of Vermark's perspectives as stated above, on the value potentials on available Nigerian native materials for make-up productions, this study presents the list of selected raw materials available in the Nigerian soil and environment ready to be tapped and refined for global use:

| S/N | NATIVE MATERIALS IN NIGERIA | NATURAL SOURCES | BOTANICAL NAME | RELEVANCE IN MAKE-UP DESIGN |
|-----|-----------------------------|---|--------------------------|---|
| 1. | Henna | From a tree plant called Hina or mignonette | LawsoniaInermis | Used for tattoo designs and also mixed to produce colour hair dyes |
| 2. | Aloe Vera | Aloe Plant | Aloe Barba densis miller | Natural skin moisturizer |
| 3. | Rose Fluid | Genus Hibiscus | Rosa | Used as natural astringent |
| 4. | Lavender Oil | Lavender Plant | Lavandula latifolia | Used as a natural anti-bacterial ingredient to preserve makeup and as Sweat control agent to sustain the stay of makeup on skin |

| | | | | |
|-----|-------------------|--|--------------------|---|
| 5. | Turmeric Powder | Turmeric is a rhizomatous perennial plant belonging to ginger family | Curcuma | Used to enhance glowing effects in makeup design |
| 6. | Beef root Powder | Turmeric is a rhizomatous perennial plant belonging to ginger family | Beta Vulgaris | Used to produce lips colourant for makeup |
| 7. | Kohl powder/Juice | From mineral called lead | Kajal | Used to colour pigment |
| 8. | Camwood Powder | From camwood tree bark | Baphianitida | |
| 9. | Kernel oil | From palm kernel | Elaeis guineensis | Used to produce organic skin moisturizer |
| 10. | Chamomile | Chamomile plants | Matricariarecutita | Used as natural moisturizer and also as astringent |
| 11. | Oat meal | From oat grass | Avena sativa | Keeps dirt away from the skin before makeup and also used as an exfoliant |
| 12. | Baobab oil | From Baobab tree | Ada Sonia digitata | Used as hair conditioner and to |

The above list is not exhaustive as more are to be discovered with time through further experimentation of samples as deem it fit to be subjected to appropriate scientific research and laboratory testing process.

Discussion

The dynamics of modern economy redefine the function of innovation engineered by the appropriation of self-knowledge and technological externalities that is driven by the display of more practical ideas exploring the knowledge bank of creative individuals to discover new potentials within a particular environment to discourage dependency. According to Christopher Ziemnowich, “a variety of factors will cause changes in an economy. Among the most important is growth and development. This has to do with the introduction of innovations into the economy such as new products and production techniques” (92). Schumpeter, in Ziemnowich, highlights some fundamental factors to justify the innovation theory which include:

introducing ways of combining new materials and forces within a reach and need. To produce another thing or the same thing by a different method and new means to combine these forces. Innovation is becoming increasingly important in the development of many countries' economy. The impact of technology is socially and economically cumbersome. (79).

He further adds that:

the introduction of new products or techniques or of a new quality that consumers are not yet familiar with. The introduction of a new method of production not yet tested in the branch of manufacture concerned. The opening of a new market; a market which the branch of manufacture in question has not previously entered. The conquest of a new source of supply of raw materials irrespective of whether this source already existed or has just been created. (124).

Undoubtedly, innovations have birthed new ideologies in theatre practice especially in theatre design and technology. The evolving multi-dimensional technologies employed to assist in dramatic communication are products of innovation. Examples of such innovations could be seen in areas like lighting, sound effects, scenery, and costumes. Therefore, innovation has been an existing aspect of theatre practice and has advanced the theatre across milieus of theatre development. New products and ideas can be borne out of the need to provide an alternative to exotic make-up products in the discovery of the potential native raw materials for relevant industries. The provision of native alternative to exotic make-up products can help reposition Nigeria film and theatre industries in the face of inaccessibility and high cost of procuring these alien products. The study believes that such development will introduce newness in the field of makeup. The rationality of this study is determined by the necessity to relocate the make-up artist's mind from depending solely on exotic products for his work whereas there are available native materials as alternatives. The rationality in this context corroborates the assertion of Yakubu Ochefu et al that "knowledge has always played an important role in the development of societies in their material as well as in their institutional and cultural achievements" (39).

From social and cultural perspectives, local production may be a way of improving national sustainability performance by maximizing the values and potentials of indigenous materials to give alternative solutions to national needs by adding to income generation, employment, and social change. Matthew Adaowo opines that "a country's trading system is believed to improve when dependence on foreign goods is reduced and improves upon developing, promoting and exporting her local brands..." (341).

To this end, alternative means should be made available to complement or perhaps replace the dependency of the film and theatre industries' practitioners on exotic and imported make-up products through galvanizing the native natural raw materials available in the Nigerian soil through coordinated scientific and laboratory process; with specifications that meet with international standard in make-up design products.

Summary and Conclusion

In a dynamic world, as can be observed in contemporary period; dependency on exotic products can become a problem to a country in diverse dimensions, ranging from professionalism, self-sufficiency and sustainability. However, in make-up design, the level of dependency on imported products is enormous and of immense concern most especially

on the areas of theatrical and film productions and can degenerate further to more devastating stage if not commensurately reduced if not completely checked. In the same vein, technology has to do with the application of knowledge in the process of doing things in solving problems. To this regard, focusing attention on native materials as alternative sources becomes paramount. Finding alternative make-up products can only be achieved through the application and engagement of scientific technology. In make-up design for instance, the products require a scientific procedure to ascertain cocktail of chemical content of each sampled material to arrive at an acceptable standard required for such products – aided by laboratory experiment. This process demands technological implications and scientific configuration because of the different types of make-up and materials are chemically based. The study therefore concludes that they are native materials available to be tapped, processed and refined for effective use to replace the exotic products and provide alternatives to halt further patronage of foreign products.

Recommendations

The study recommends that the make-up artists in Nigeria should look beyond patronizing foreign and exotic make-up products in their different productions at the detriment of the equivalent native materials available. It recommends also that the laboratory scientists in Nigeria should show concern in this area to help booster more researches and to further discover more make-up products from refining the available native raw materials spread across the land of the country. Also, the stakeholders in the Nigerian entertainment industry mostly in the areas of film and theatre, knowing the importance and benefits of galvanizing resources to have a local make-up products that can favourably compete with the exotic one, should endeavour to invest in the process of having alternative products in make-up design. Finally, the Nigerian government should take the front burner in sponsoring research programmes geared at finding alternative to the reliance on exotic costume products with the available native raw materials which will it turn be a source of revenue generation to boost the gross income of the Nigerian economy while also reducing the financial burden and scarcity in favour of the indigenous make-up artists.

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