



EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES THROUGH TEXTILE INNOVATION: MODERN TIE AND DYE AS A MODEL FOR SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS IN ILARO.

Paul S. Seyi-Gbangbayau¹, Elesin Olanrewaju Ganiy²

¹Department of Art and Design, The Federal Polytechnic, Ilaro, Nigeria

Email: paul.seyi-gbangbayau@federalpolyilaro.edu.ng

²Department of Urban and Regional Planning, The Federal Polytechnic, Ilaro, Nigeria

Email: olanrewaju.elesin@federalpolyilaro.edu.ng

Abstract:

In the face of rising unemployment, rural-urban migration, and the decline of indigenous crafts, there is a pressing need to revitalize traditional skills through modern innovation to foster sustainable livelihoods. This paper focuses on Ilaro, a culturally significant town in Yewaland, Ogun State, known for its deep-rooted crafts like pottery heritage. Despite the historical relevance of tie and dye (adire) practices in the region, the craft remains underutilized in contemporary development strategies and lacks integration into modern production and marketing systems. The study investigates how the modernization of traditional tie and dye techniques—through the integration of science, design technology, and entrepreneurship—can economically and socially empower communities in Ilaro. Employing a mixed-method approach, including field observations, stakeholder interviews, participatory workshops, and experimental design, the paper explores the application of eco-friendly dyes, contemporary fashion trends, and small-scale production technologies. Findings reveal that revitalized textile practices can serve as viable microenterprises, especially when reinforced with vocational training, cooperative structures, and digital marketing strategies. The study recommends incorporating modern tie and dye into vocational education in Yewaland, supporting local cooperatives with micro-financing, and positioning Ilaro as a creative textile hub. These strategies can transform textile innovation into a sustainable tool for livelihood development, cultural preservation, and economic resilience in Ogun State.

Keywords: Adire, Tie and Dye, Empowerment, Communities, Livelihoods.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background History

Ilaro is a town located in Ogun State, Nigeria, with an estimated population of 57,850 people. It serves as the administrative headquarters of Yewa South Local Government Area, formerly known as the Egbado division in the defunct Western State, which later became part of Ogun State. Ilaro is approximately 50 kilometers from Abeokuta, the Ogun State capital, and about 100 kilometers from Ikeja, the capital of Lagos State.

The people of Ilaro possess a vibrant and deeply rooted cultural heritage. They are the originators of the “Bolojo” and “Gelede” dances. During Gelede performances, communication takes place through songs called “EFE,” which are often composed to highlight and correct societal misconduct. Individuals

may be unaware that their actions have been observed until they attend a Bolojo or Gelede performance, where specially composed songs are performed, indirectly addressing their misdeeds.

However, the practice of tie and dye is not well known. This paper is aimed at introducing textile art as part of economic empowerment for women and youths in particular.

Textile production, particularly the tie and dye technique known as adire, has long been a staple of Yoruba culture, representing both artistic identity and economic engagement. In Ilaro, a town in Yewaland, Ogun State, this heritage is not of deep cultural significance, but this tradition can be developed within the community. In areas like Abeokuta a very close location to Ilaro, traditionally produced by



women using indigo dyes and resist methods, adire has served as a medium of storytelling, fashion, and commerce. However, with globalization and industrialization, traditional textile crafts have suffered neglect, causing a significant decline in skills transmission, market viability, and community pride.

Despite Ilaro's historical cultural richness, adire or tie and dye has limited significant, innovation and modernization in its production. The tie and dye craft is not integrated into formal economic systems, nor is it adapted to meet contemporary fashion standards and global marketing demands. Consequently, many youths and women in the community face limited livelihood opportunities, often migrating to urban centers in search of employment, hence the gap filled by this research work.

The goal of this study is to explore how the modernization of traditional tie and dye practices can empower communities economically and socially, creating sustainable livelihood opportunities in Ilaro.

The objectives of this paper include

To document the current state of tie and dye production in Ilaro.

To explore innovative techniques and eco-friendly practices in modern textile design.

To assess the potential of tie and dye as a viable economic activity for women and youths.

To recommend strategies for the integration of modern tie and dye into vocational education and entrepreneurship.

The study is limited to Ilaro in Ogun State, focusing on textile practitioners, cultural stakeholders, fashion entrepreneurs, and local youths involved or interested in tie and dye practices. It investigates both traditional knowledge and modern techniques in textile innovation.

The research is grounded in the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (SLF), which identifies assets (natural, human, social, financial, and physical) that people need for sustainable living. It also applies Innovation Diffusion Theory (Rogers, 2003), which explains how, why, and at what rate new ideas and technology spread through cultures. Together, these theories provide a lens to examine how tie and dye

practices can be modernized, accepted, and scaled for community benefit.

2. Literature Review

Many literatures are available for both Fisheries and Graphics as independent subjects, there are few on the two subjects as a collaboration. However, the literature review of this research is divided into subtopics below for easy understanding.

Textile crafts have long played a vital role in the cultural and economic life of many African communities, particularly in Nigeria where traditional practices such as adire (tie and dye) continue to reflect identity, artistry, and sustainability. Scholars have increasingly drawn attention to the potential of indigenous textile technologies as vehicles for community empowerment and economic diversification, especially in rural areas (Akinwumi, 2015; Ajayi & Ayodele, 2019).

The town of Ilaro in Ogun State, with its rich cultural heritage and legacy in crafts such as pottery and textile dyeing, represents a microcosm of both the decline and the potential resurgence of indigenous knowledge systems. Despite the historical depth of tie and dye practices in the region, modern economic systems and mass-produced alternatives have contributed to their marginalization (Ogunleye, 2020). As a response, scholars and practitioners have advocated for the modernization of these practices through the integration of contemporary design, eco-friendly materials, and entrepreneurial models (Olatunji, 2018).

Seyi-Gbangbayau Paul (2024) underscores the transformative capacity of modern adire when aligned with sustainable innovation. His study explores how the fusion of tradition with modern aesthetics, coupled with digital marketing and vocational training, can revitalize dying crafts and generate income for local artisans. He emphasizes that empowering local women and youth through structured cooperative models and access to microfinance can create a ripple effect of sustainable economic activity and cultural pride. This aligns with the broader discourse on sustainable development and cultural preservation as outlined in the UNESCO (2017) framework on intangible cultural heritage.

Moreover, the application of science and technology—such as the use of organic dyes and



mobile-based marketing platforms—has been highlighted as a critical bridge between tradition and modern enterprise (Adedokun & Fashina, 2021). These innovations help address contemporary concerns related to environmental sustainability while enhancing market competitiveness and product quality.

The synergy between vocational education and community-based craft industries is another recurring theme in the literature. Studies show that integrating textile innovation into educational curricula fosters both cultural continuity and entrepreneurship (Arowolo & Ojo, 2022). By situating textile innovation within formal and informal training systems, communities like Ilaro can become incubators for creative economies and centers for cultural tourism.

In sum, the literature supports the idea that a revitalized tie and dye industry—founded on innovation, training, and cooperative entrepreneurship—can play a pivotal role in empowering communities, preserving cultural heritage, and fostering economic resilience. The current study builds on these insights by focusing specifically on Ilaro's context, offering localized strategies for textile-led development.

Historical Context of Tie and Dye (Adire)

Adire, derived from Yoruba words meaning "tie and dye," dates back to the early 20th century, prominently among the Egba people. It evolved from hand-painted resist designs using cassava paste to more elaborate methods involving stitch and tied resists (Ajibade, 2017). Traditionally, it served as an economic activity among women, passed down through generations.

Decline of Indigenous Textile Crafts

Globalization and the influx of synthetic fabrics and mass-produced clothing have negatively impacted indigenous crafts (Okonkwo, 2019). The neglect of traditional knowledge systems in educational curricula and policy has further marginalized local crafts, making them less appealing to younger generations.

Innovation and Sustainability in Textile Practices

Modern textile innovation emphasizes eco-conscious production using natural dyes, recycled fabrics, and minimal water usage (Fletcher, 2008). Contemporary

tie and dye integrates science and design technology to produce durable and fashion-forward textiles. This aligns with SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production).

Empowerment Through Creative Enterprise

Creative industries offer significant potential for economic empowerment (UNCTAD, 2021). Women and youth, when equipped with technical and entrepreneurial skills, can transform crafts into viable enterprises. Digital platforms also allow wider market access, reducing reliance on local demand alone.

Case Studies in Textile-Based Livelihoods

Successful models in Abeokuta and Osogbo show how community-based workshops, artist cooperatives, and microloans have supported tie and dye entrepreneurship (Ojo & Adeyemi, 2020). These cases emphasize the role of structured training and market access in revitalizing textile heritage.

Methodology

Research Design

This study employs a mixed-methods approach combining qualitative and quantitative techniques to gather comprehensive insights into the role of modern tie and dye in community empowerment.

Data Collection

Field Observations and Workshop: Visits to local adire workshops in Ilaro. One of which was organised by the Town and Gown Directorate of the Federal Polytechnic, Ilaro, Ogun State where 40 participants from both the community and the polytechnic took part in the training. This participatory workshop included training sessions introducing eco-friendly dyeing, digital printing, and modern pattern techniques.

Experimental Design: During the programme the participants were grouped into of 20 of 2 participants in a group to produced textiles using traditional and modern techniques for comparative analysis.

Interviews: Conducted with 25 participants, including textile artisans, market women, fashion entrepreneurs, and local government officials.

Below are pictures of samples of the work produced at the workshop.



Figure 1: One colour tie and dye.

Figure 2: Traditional technique of tie and dye

Figure 3: Participants at work during the workshop at Stadium close to the Palace of Olu Of Ilaro

Photograph courtesy: The Authors, 2024

Results and Discussion

Traditional Practices and Challenges

Findings reveal that while traditional knowledge is still alive, artisans lack access to modern materials, sustainable dye sources, and contemporary design skills. Most tie and dye are sold in local markets with minimal branding or innovation.

Community Interest in Innovation

Youths and women expressed high interest in acquiring new skills, especially those integrating design with digital platforms. Participants

appreciated workshops on natural dyes (e.g., from turmeric, hibiscus) and new patterning techniques.

Economic Potential of Revitalized Tie and Dye

Experimental design showed that modernized textiles fetched higher prices and had broader market appeal. Participants who adopted digital marketing strategies reached clients across Nigeria and even internationally.

Social and Cultural Impact

The revitalization of adire boosted community pride and encouraged intergenerational learning. Elder



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artisans became mentors, while younger participants introduced technological innovations, creating a dynamic learning exchange.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

Modernizing traditional tie and dye practices in Ilaro presents a powerful model for community empowerment, sustainable livelihood creation, and cultural revitalization. By integrating eco-friendly practices, design technology, and entrepreneurial training, adire production can move beyond local markets to become a competitive creative industry.

Recommendations

1. Vocational Education Integration: Incorporate modern tie and dye into school curricula and local skill acquisition programs.
2. Micro-Finance Support: Provide financial support for artisans and cooperatives to scale up production and access markets.
3. Design and Technology Hubs: Establish innovation centers in Ilaro to foster continuous learning, experimentation, and creativity.
4. Digital Marketing Training: Empower artisans with skills in social media marketing, e-commerce, and branding.
5. Government and NGO Partnerships: Collaborate with development agencies to support sustainable textile initiatives in rural areas.

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