

**Impact of costumes in dance as vehicle for promotion of dance culture and indigenous cultural heritage for economic development in Nigeria**

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**Abstract**

The concept of costume in dance seems to be paid less attention by the audience of dance performance. Visual arts that form the costume are seen as normal body adornments associated with dance or a mere cloth for traditional dance code. This misconception needs not to be ignored. The study aimed at examining this problem by adopting a comparative descriptive survey for indigenous audience perception where a traditional dance performed with costume and another performed without costume are compared using traditional dance by Igbo students of Music Department, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Enugu State, Nigeria as a working metaphor. Structured questionnaire entitled “Indigenous Audience Perception of Traditional Dance Costume, IAPTDC” was developed to collect relevant data for this study. Two research questions were posed and one hypothesis was tested in the study. The research questions were analysed using mean and standard deviation, while the hypothesis was tested using t-test at .05 level of significant. The findings of this study revealed, among others, that costume in dance is beyond dress codes or body adornments associated with dance. It further revealed the differences in aesthetic and unique nature of dance that is performed with costumes, and dance performed without costumes. Educational contribution of the findings were discussed and recommendations were also made, which include that the public should see costume in dance as evidence of visual arts through which visual artistic skill creation and indigenous cultural heritage could unfold and be promoted.

**Keywords:** costumes; audience perception; traditional dance costume; visual arts.

**Introduction**

Dancers spend hours on the stage dancing and showcasing their ability, while audience serves as feedback for establishing the impact perceived from their performance. Costume influences the perception of the audience. This means that costume is the tool for traditional dance performance, and a dance without costume looks uninteresting. However, one of the greatest demands of African traditional dance is the evidence of cultural identity which can be found in costume.

Evidences have shown that costume allows for new ways of learning of African culture, and traditional dance is an important aspect. It also motivates learning of the indigenous cultural heritage by children as they are usually fascinated with dance. Ibagere (2010) views dance in Africa traditional context as functional that is usually performed during a social function; and it is an element of communication, which usually communicates African elements in African traditional dance. That is why African traditional dances are imbued with meanings whenever they are performed. Many people all over the world viewed traditional dance and its beauty in three major forms: their melodious sounds from the beating of drums and singing, dance steps and costumes. Among the three, costume serves as one of the powerful means that projects the beauty of traditional dance, uplifts culture and cultural heritage as well as interesting means for promotion of national economy.

Costume in traditional dance also stands as means for advertising of cultural values. In other words, costuming in African traditional dance, especially Nigeria, has all it takes in communicating African elements and cultural values to the entire world through traditional dance performance. Costume also serves as a strong tool for identification of a high level of creativity in the entire field of visual arts production. Without costume, a dance performance would look uninteresting and boring to the viewers.

This study, therefore, focused on indigenous audience perception of costume as a visual art in traditional dance performance. Two dance performances – one traditional dance performed with costume and another performed without costume - were focus of the study. The two dances were performed two different groups of traditional Igbo dance made up of students of the Department of Music, University of Nigeria Nsukka, Enugu State, Nigeria. The audiences were asked to give their perception about the two performances to point out whether or not the usage or non-usage of costume had any implications on the performances. Their responses were analysed, and the outcome constitutes the findings of this study.

### **Statement of problem**

Costume is a highly symbolic and an important aspect of performing arts that accentuates the interpretative and perceptual meanings of the physical appearance/movement of dancers. It is filled with the communicative abilities that showcase visual artistic skill creation in traditional dance, and this shows its uniqueness and commands attraction of an audience. The values of costume in any dance performance cannot be over-emphasised. Unfortunately, misconceptions that are associated with costume in traditional dance seemingly create wrong ideas about costumes. While some people see it as fashion or dress code, others see it as body adornment associated with traditional dance and so on. There is need to correct these misconceptions. This would help towards promoting better understanding and appreciation of the aesthetics of visual arts in traditional dance and its cultural relevance. Although some researchers have assessed visual arts in performing, however, no work examining audience perception about (non-)use of costume in Igbo

traditional dance performance by the students of the Department of Music, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, seems to have been undertaken.

### **Objectives of the study**

The objectives of this study are to:

- i. identify the visual arts elements in Igbo traditional dance performance by the students of Department of Music, University of Nigeria, Nsukka; and
- ii. examine the influence of costume on audience perception of traditional dance performed with costume and that performed without costume.

### **Research questions**

To guide this study, the following research questions were put forward.

- i. What are the visual arts elements in Igbo traditional dance performance by the students of Department of Music, University of Nigeria, Nsukka?
- ii. What is the influence of costume on audience perception of traditional dance performed with costume and that performed without costume?

### **Research hypothesis**

To answer the research questions above, a hypothesis was formulated to determine the influence of costume in the appraisal of a dance performance.

**HO:** There is no statistically significant influence of costume on audience perception of the two Igbo traditional dance performances by two groups of students of the Department of Music, University of Nigeria, Nsukka?

### **Literature review**

Since the beginning of the world, people from the different parts have identified themselves with costumes because of its great values. Many scholars have differing conceptions about costume based on their own perspectives.

According to Sinclair (2014) costume is defined as clothes worn in a particular place or during a particular period for a special occasion. Efimova and Kortunor (2013) define costume as a work of art that always reflected a certain stage in the development of peoples' culture, which is closely connected with architecture, painting, music and theatre. This means that costume was associated with customs, and habits that determine the character of the era, which traditional dance displayed. Akiga (2013) opines that costume is a complete set of outer garments including the way body is decorated and the hairdo is styled. He asserts further that some women costumed heavily with ornamentations in order to show off their wealth or that of their family. Eicher (2011) views costume as the material worn on the body to modify its surface. Ibagere (2010) agrees that costume is body adornment that relates to all forms of apparel worn by a person as a member of the society; this includes other properties such as walking stick, head gear, cap, beads, shoes, bangles and other jewelry that help to define or identify the person. He further states that in Nigeria, as a multicultural nation, it generally accepted that the manner of a person's dressing reveals the area of origin of that particular person. Macdonald (2000) affirms that costume is a manner of dressing for fancy display.

From the above citations one can simply define costume as the total body adornment for a particular occasion which involves the outlook from head down to toe as well as make-up art associated with it. In traditional dance, costume is everything the dancers wear on the stage including wig, dress, jewelries and make-up. This coheres with Hamlyn's (2000) belief that costume can be seen as cloth worn on the stage.

It is worthy to note that the term costume is beyond body coverage; rather, it is a component of visual arts contents of traditional dance, which is used to reveal the indigenous material culture as well as artistic skill creation in a dance. From all indications costume, especially for festivals or traditional dances are usually colourful, and they are worn to attract attention from audiences (visitors, tourists, and others) who participate in the arena or immediate environment where the occasion is being held.

Costumes can be seen in three major types: uniform costume; traditional costume; and dramatic costumes.

- i. Uniform costume, which is dress code prescribed and worn by a particular group of people. For instance, uniforms worn by students, nurses, lawyers, and so on.
- ii. Traditional costume, which is used to identify particular communities, towns and organisations. It is commonly used for ceremonial purposes and functions, such as those for age-grades, performance groups, as well as political rallies where party members adorn their costumes known as *aso-ebi*.
- iii. Dramatic costumes, which are special cloths worn by actors and actresses during acting on stage.

The use of costume promotes unity and progress and serves as symbol of identification, responsibility and hard work in a community. The art of costuming serves great functions to mankind. It serves as a communication art form that 'speaks' about man's origin, culture and cultural identity that is projected in non-verbal art form. It serves as connecting tool to religious rituals, marriages, chieftaincy titles, social groups as well as to show social status. According to Efimova and Kortunov (2013), the art of costuming serves as a symbol of beauty and harmony which contributes to the formation of aesthetic taste of the person who wears it. These views are clearly exemplified in traditional dance costume of the Igbo.

### **Traditional dance costume**

In order to understand the nature of costume in traditional dance, there is need to understand the concept of tradition. According to Koutsouba (2007) tradition is the knowledge that has been stored within a long period of time in a society of people and passes down from generation to generation. This knowledge is embodied in traditional dance, besides other means of cultural preservation and propagation; it forms the basic foundation of traditional dance.

Traditional dance as part of tradition is characterised by word of mouth [through singing], creativity, collectivity, anonymity, improvisation, vitality, energy, change and constant transformation (Koutsouba, 2010). According to Issuu (2014), the indigenous traditional dance is one of the unique techniques indigenes have employed

in passing on their histories and beliefs through generations. He further says that it is a type of traditional dance which Africans attach more importance to than other cultures do since it is a part of the oral history rather than solely for social entertainment.

Through traditional dance, the cultural elements of the past are constantly renewed and shaped within the society itself. The use of visual effects become crucial and cannot be avoided because each of the visual elements used has its symbolic meaning and purpose. According to Gilbert (2015), traditional dance enhances people's ability to read and decode the quality of motion and moving body, to interpret ideas and emotions symbolically through their body movements and artistic creation in their costumes. Being aware of the close relationship between costume and traditional dance (movement), viewers traditionally participate with applause and exclamations, praising the dancers' virtuosity, grace and harmony (Lykesas, 2016).

Traditional dance represents society itself as it provides artistic/dancing expression, entertains, teaches and nurtures through beautiful waves of costumes and the dynamics of rhythmic movements. In traditional dance, costume helps to display the expressive and artistic designs of inner wealth and the dignity of the individual in most African festivals and traditional dances from the time of ancient. This means that costume is a visual element of traditional dance that has a primary aim of transforming dancing style while passing message across to the audience.

Costume, according to Encyclopaedia Britannica (2012), is clothing designed to allow dancers or the wearer freedom of movement while at the same time enhancing the visual effect of dance movements. The aesthetic appeal of the wearer is displayed in the creative ideology of the costume and the communicative information is sent out to the audience or viewers. It serves as aid to uplift the aesthetics of traditional dance as well as a tool for displaying outstanding level of dance techniques and styles involved in dancing performance. It serves as engine in promotion of indigenous cultural identity. It also serves as a means of education where the audience or viewers are educated on the type of people in a particular environment, their ways of life, their indigenous materials as well as cultural heritage and values. It helps for identification of a dance group, and strengthens relationship as well as gender identification.

### **Methodology**

This research was carried out in University of Nigeria Nsukka Campus, Enugu State, Nigeria. It adopted a descriptive survey research design. The population for this study comprised of staff, students and other viewers (male and female) that were physically present that are believed to have good understanding of the questionnaire (costume and traditional dance) and that can give concrete information based on his or her own perception. Multi-stage sampling technique was employed to select three hundred and fifty viewers that were used for this study. A researcher-designed structured questionnaire entitled "Indigenous Audience Perception of Traditional Dance Costume, IAPTDC" was developed to collect relevant data for this study.

The IAPTDC comprises two major sections. Section A sought for demographic information of the respondents while section B contains ten items to which viewers were to indicate their levels of acceptance on a five-liket point scale Strongly Agree (4), Agree (3), Undecided (0), Decided (2) and Strongly Decided (1). The instrument was validated by two lecturers; one from Fine and Applied Arts Department and one from Science Department. The instrument was adjudged to be reliable and consistent in measurement. In distribution of questionnaire, Convenience sampling technique was adopted to administer copies of questionnaire in a face-to-face contact to individual respondents. The researcher distributed copies of the questionnaire with the help of three research assistants. The research assistants were trained by the researcher by explaining the essence of the study, the essence of face-to-face contact distribution and formats in responding to the items in case of questions from the respondents. A total number of 350 questionnaires distributed, and these were retrieved and used for analysis. Two research questions were posed, and one hypothesis was tested for the study. The research questions were answered using mean and standard deviation, while the hypothesis was tested, using t-test at .05 level of significance.

## Results

**Table 1:** Distribution of Indigenous Audience Perception of Visual Arts of Traditional Dance Costume in terms of dance performed with costume and dance performed without costume

Number of Respondents	Costume Application	
	Dance performed with costume	Dance performed without costume
350	252	98

Table 1 above shows the distribution of respondents in terms of audience perception of dance performed with costume and without costume. The total number of respondents is three hundred and fifty. Of this number 252 are selected for those performed with costume, while 98 are for those performed without costume.

i. **Research Question 1:** What are the visual arts elements in Igbo traditional dance performance by the students of Department of Music, University of Nigeria, Nsukka? To answer this question, each element will be considered to be sufficiently accepted if the mean is  $(\bar{X}) \geq 2.50$ , otherwise it will be rejected or considered to be insufficiently acquired.

**Table 2:** Responses of the indigenous audience perception showing elements that define visual arts (costume) in traditional dance group of Igbo students of Music Department University of Nigeria, Nsukka. (n = 350)

S/N	Likely Elements	SA	A	UDS	D	SD	Mean	Std Deviation	Decision
		(4)	(3)	(0)	(2)	(1)	(M)	(SD)	(D)
i.	Costumes in traditional dance Signify the indigenous craft and art	165	111	0	57	17	3.29	1.81	Accepted
2.	Costumes in traditional dance play effective contrast in expression of dance movement making the actions look more vivid.	110	183	0	44	13	3.11	1.76	Accepted
3	Costumes in traditional dance enhance total attraction and aesthetics of dance performance to the audience.	136	137	0	57	20	3.12	1.76	Accepted
4	Costumes in traditional dance signified creative thinking and artistic skills.	199	122	0	12	17	4.06	2.01	Accepted
5	Costumes in traditional dance speak key ideas to the audience than in real life representation.	150	120	0	30	50	3.05	1.74	Accepted

Decision rule: rate each activity as accepted if the mean is  $\bar{X} \geq 2.50$ , otherwise reject.

Table 2 above sought to determine the result of responses of the indigenous audience perception showing likely elements that define Visual arts (costume) in Igbo traditional dance performance by the students of Department of Music, University of Nigeria, Nsukka. From responses, the high grades mean result shows that traditional dance is embodied with reasonable elements that showcase visual arts in traditional dance. This means that the artistic contents of costume in traditional dance are totally products of Visual arts which do not only promote the dance culture but also promote the indigenous cultural materials as well as artistic skill creation through traditional dance.

**Research Question 2:** What is the influence of costume on audience perception of traditional dance performed with costume and that performed without costume?

**Table 3:** Responses of the indigenous audience perception on dance when performed with costume and without costume by traditional dance group of Igbo students of Department of Music, University of Nigeria, Nsukka.

ITEM STATEMENTS The result of indigenous audience perception on dance based on costume influence	DANCE PERFORMED WITH COSTUME (N= 252)							DANCE PERFORMED WITHOUT COSTUME (N=98)						
	SA	A	UND	D	SD	M	SD	SA	A	UND	D	SD	M	SD
	(4)	(3)	(0)	(2)	(1)			(4)	(3)	(0)	(2)	(1)		
1. Traditional dance performed with costumes is more attracting, than one without costume.	135	101	0	06	10	3.43	1.85	11	18	0	29	40	2.0	1.42
2. Traditional dance performed with	146	71	0	10	25	3.34	1.82	03	04	0	51	40	1.69	1.3



costumes serve as symbol of identification of the dance group.														
3. Traditional dance performed with costume speaks great volume of indigenous materials and cultural heritage unlike the one performed without costume	135	70	0	13	34	3.21	1.79	06	12	0	50	30	1.93	1.38
4. Traditional dance when performed with costumes showcase aestheticism, draw more attraction and interest of the viewers	142	87	0	13	10	3.43	1.85	03	04	0	50	41	1.68	1.29
5. Costume used in traditional dance is the evidence of artistic skill creation derived from Visual arts discipline.	121	82	0	38	11	3.24	1.8	06	17	0	30	45	1.83	1.35
<b>Overall mean</b>						3.33	2.84						1.82	0.28

Table 3 shows the responses of indigenous audience viewers on traditional dance performed with costume and without costume. From the table, traditional dance performed with costume showcases aestheticism, attraction, speaks great volume of symbolic identification, as well as great volume of artistic skill derived from Visual arts.

On the other hand, revise is the case on the traditional dance performed without costume, no reasonable elements that promote the aesthetics or attraction of the dance. It may be on this note that traditional dance performed without costume is termed it to be like child play. The overall mean of traditional dance performed with costume is 3.33 (SD = 2.84), while the one performed without costume is 1.82 (SD = 0.28).



**Research hypothesis**

**HO:** There is no statistically significant influence of the indigenous audience perception of traditional dance performed with costume and one performed without costume of traditional dance group of Igbo students of Department of Music, University of Nigeria, Nsukka.

**HO:** To answer questions on the hypothesis, the HO is rejected if calculated t-test is greater than (>) t-critical t-value, otherwise accept HO.

**Table 4.** T-test of significance of difference between the mean responses of the indigence audience viewers of traditional dance when performed with costume and without costume by traditional dance group of Igbo students of Department of Music, University of Nigeria, Nsukka.

Variable	Group	Mean, $\bar{X}$	Std.Dev.	N	DF	t-cal	t-crit	Decision
Costume influence	With							
	Costume	3.33	2.84	252	348	17.37	1.96	Rejected
	Without Costume	1.28	0.28	98				

Decision rule: reject HO if t-cal > t-crit, otherwise accept HO.

Table t-test above shows the mean response of the two different dance performance (dance performed with costume and the one performed without costume) groups of traditional dance of Igbo students of Music Department University of Nigeria, Nsukka.

The one performed with costume has a high overall mean,  $\bar{X} = 3.33$  and standard deviation (SD)= 2.84, while the one performed without costume have mean,  $\bar{X}$  (N = 1.28, SD = 0.28). The t-calculated (17.37) is greater than the critical/table value (1.960). Hence, HO is rejected. It is therefore concluded that costume has a statistically significant influence on the traditional dance in favour of traditional dance group of Igbo students of Department of Music, University of Nigeria, Nsukka.

**Summary of findings**

The summery of this study is based on the findings that costumes have statistically significant influence in traditional dance, traditional dance performed without costume has no reasonable elements that promote the aesthetic attraction of the dance, costumes in traditional dance have significant justification of elements in cultural uplifting and visual artistic contents of costumes in traditional dance are highly significantly symbolic. Therefore, the content of the results of this study revealed a number of results, which are stated below.

1. The traditional dance group of Igbo students of Department of Music, University of Nigeria, Nsukka possessed sufficient elements that command attraction with the regards to the following; aesthetic attraction, symbolic identification, artistic skill, effective contrast expression, indigenous craft and art identification which proved Visual arts contents in traditional dance.

2. The traditional dance group of Igbo students of Department of Music, University of Nigeria, Nsukka performed with costume is more attracting and possesses all the artistic costume contents derived from Visual arts discipline. This is clearly confirmed from high grade result of the overall mean is 3.33 (SD = 2.84) as shown in Table 3 above.
3. The traditional dance group of Igbo students of Department of Music, University of Nigeria, Nsukka performed without costume has no reasonable elements that promote the aesthetic attraction of the dance. Therefore, it is termed uninteresting by the viewers. This is confirmed by the low grade mean is 1.82 (SD = 0.28) in the Table 3 above.
4. Costume significantly has influence among the indigenous traditional dances and traditional dance groups of Igbo students of Department of Music, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, is not exceptional.

### **Contribution to knowledge**

The findings of this study have great contribution to the knowledge among the masses especially the growing youths as it will open their minds on the importance of visual arts in the promotion of traditional dance as well as rapid spread of cultural heritage worldwide through traditional dance. The contribution of this study to knowledge manifests in the following - clarification of misconception, identification of indigenous materials, relationship between visual art and traditional dance, promotion of indigenous culture, and marketing of cultural materials and promotion of tourism.

### **Clarification of misconception**

From the findings it is revealed that visual arts and traditional dance are discovered to be the major factors for spread of indigenous cultural heritage materials far and wide in the society. It is revealed that costume in traditional dance unveils the Visual artistic contents and its values in traditional dance. It also reveals that traditional dance performed with costume comes out fine and better and very interesting than the one performed without costume. Thus, misconception on costume in relation to traditional dance is tided. Without the level of clarification in this study, the problem of misconception on Visual arts and traditional dance in relation to costume (that costume in traditional dance is a mere dress code for dance or a mere body adornment that burst the aesthetics of traditional dance) wouldn't have been clarified. This will not only obstruct the level of understanding of values of Visual arts in traditional dance through costume, but will also obstruct the knowledge of traditional dance as the major means for promotion of indigenous cultural heritage far and wide in the society.

### **Identification of indigenous materials**

The findings helped to identify the true environmental materials and they are made known to the masses especially to the knowledge of the youths that have more interest for foreign materials.

### **Relationship between visual art and traditional dance**

Through the study it is believed that the viewers will know the value of visual art in traditional dance like promotion of aesthetics and attraction in dance, contrast,

symbolical identification of indigenous craft and art, and so on. It will also create enablement for the viewers to understand traditional dance costume as the contents of visual arts discipline which contribute immensely to the rapid spread of creative skill artistic creation to the world.

### **Promotion of indigenous culture**

Through traditional dance and visual arts discipline, cultural heritages are upheld and transmitted to future generations. Hence, through this study, the youth of the present generation will be at great advantage of knowing their true cultural identities and uphold them for subsequent generations.

### **Marketing of cultural materials and promotion of tourism**

Traditional dance attracts the interest of the viewers both far and near. However, through traditional dance, the indigenous cultural materials and art works are unveiled to the public who gather to view the dance. Interested ones will also purchase any of these materials as they appeal to them.

### **Conclusion**

Costume forms the integral part of any performance and cannot be appreciable without performances. It serves as attraction for audience perception of dance performances as well as engine for promotion of cultural heritage. The visual arts contents of costume reveal the artistic skill creation in traditional dance performance as evidence of Visual arts discipline. In conclusion, it is hoped that this study would place the indigenous audience perception of visual arts in traditional dance costume at the rightful perspective any viewer of traditional dance will understand the artistic contents in traditional dance as the products of visual art disciplines in order to understand the value of Art and patronised the indigenous works of art and craft for promotion of cultural heritage.

### **Recommendations**

The findings of this study and its contribution to knowledge create very good understanding of cultural materials and visual arts contents in traditional dance, especially costume. In the light of these, this study makes the recommendations presented below.

- i. Going by knowledge of costume, education is the order of the day. Therefore, Minister of education and school management should see that Art teaching embraces the teaching of costume and make-up art as course of study in Nigerian schools and encouraged in all level of education in Nigeria by seeing that the environment is made conducive by provision of necessary infrastructures for teaching and learning of Visual arts in education system.
- ii. As cultural identity, the entertainment industries, lovers of traditional dances, Art faculties in Nigerian institutions, Art galleries and Museums should endeavor to see that costumes used in performances is preserved and documented for it not to go into extinction for the purpose of references in time when they are needed.
- iii. Minister of Arts and Culture should see that Art and visual culture are encouraged in Nigerian society by promoting and marketing of indigenous cultural materials

- and art works through tourism by creation of amusement parks for entertainment industries to constantly engaged in entertainment with use of costumes that will attract people far and wide to come and buy the indigenous products.
- iv. Teachers in cultural setting of education system, traditional dancers and music industries should endeavor to see that creative skills and indigenous cultural materials are promoted by performing with costumes at any outing on a stage.
  - v. As the Visual arts discipline contents, costume designers should embrace the habit of attending to different festivals, which portray the people's culture in order to be versatile in their indigenous art culture and always be able to present those designs line of work whenever they are needed.
  - vi. Since acquisition of skills (including skills for costume designing) is the order of the day for youth's empowerment, Government in collaboration with Tetfund and other interested organisation bodies should see that Art students are encouraged by providing them with some funds in support of their Art studies.
  - vii. The entire public should start seeing costume as having qualities beyond mere artistic body adornments associated with traditional dance features, but also a viable tool for cultural interpretation.

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