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## THE EFFECT OF ECONOMIC RECESSION ON CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR: AN OVERVIEW OF PATRONAGE OF LOCALLY MADE SHOES IN ABA

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### ABSTRACT

This study was undertaken to interrogate the economic recession on locally made foot wears in Aba, Nigeria. Primary data were collected using questionnaire and in-depth interview. Three critical variables were examined to determine which is one of them has the greatest impact on the shift in consumption pattern. The data revealed that the high cost of imported foot wears is driving consumers to buying locally made one. Over 80% of the respondents said that high cost made them to switch. The study also revealed that over 60% of the respondents were not given to buying locally made foot wears before the economic downturn. The paper recommends that government should put in place measures to consolidate on the economic gains recorded. Stricter control over importation of foreign made foot wears should be enforced, while materials that are imported for the making of the foot wears should be subsidized in the interim, while local alternative should be sourced and developed in the long term.

### INTRODUCTION

It is a truism that Nigerians have preference for foreign made goods over locally made ones (Iyiola *et. al*, 2018, Oladele and Arogundade, 2011, Iloani, 2017, Uduak, *et. al* 2025). Scholars have documented this fact and various governments in the country have mounted and continued to mount sustained campaigns for citizens to buy made in Nigeria products. Many reasons may count for this attitude. There is a pervading notion that locally made products are of inferior quality when compared with foreign made ones. Many Nigerians have penchant for foreign products and show disdain for locally made one. This attitude has

been blamed on poor quality of some Nigerian made goods (Uduak, et. al 2025), affluence and latest services that technology has to offer, (Achumba, 1998), niche in marketing strategy (Kotler,1984, Oladele and Arogunde, 2021). However, with the drastic drop in the value of the local currency resulting to very high cost of imported and foreign made goods, there seems to be a shift in consumer choice. The Nigeria economy has not been favourable to its population, it has gone into recession, struggled to grow, stagnated, wobbled and plummeted. Various governments have adopted policies that are harsh to the masses such as devaluation of the currency, floating of the naira among others. The unemployment and poverty rate in the country are very high. Many commodities have gone beyond the purchasing power of many, essentials foreign commodities have become luxury that many can no longer afford them. The economic ramification of Nigerians penchant for buying foreign made products is huge. It kills the local industries, puts pressure on the local currency, stifles creativity, creates unemployment, depletes the foreign reserves, and puts pressure on balance of payment. Given the downward spiral of the economy of the country and the devaluation and volatility in the exchange rate of the naira, local industries are groaning. Some have closed while some are on live-support. This research was carried out to assess the impact of the economic downturn on locally made footwears. Since the prices of footwears have gone up and there is a strong local industry of shoemakers, the study was undertaken to determine if there is an increase in patronage of locally made footwears. The annual estimate of the total amount used in importing footwear into the country is huge, Trendeconomy put it at 65billion dollars in 2023. However, locally made footwears are beginning to gain acceptance from consumers. This work examined the likely factors that contribute to consumer shift in choice, from foreign footwears to locally made ones.

### **Statement of the problem**

The major constrain for many local artisans is patronage. The influx of the local market with alternative foreign made products have remained a challenge to the growth and expansion of many local manufacturers. The efforts at supporting the local industries through ban or restriction on importation of certain goods have yielded little results due to several reasons; one of which is smuggling. The cheap prices of some of these foreign made products are contributing in making them attractive and affordable for many, thereby limiting patronage of similar locally manufactured ones. However, in the recent years following the decline of the country's economy and the recession that followed, many foreign made goods have gone beyond the reach of many Nigerians. The alternatives are the local substitutes. The

development has seen some locally made goods beginning to enjoy greater patronage. And one of such products is locally made footwears. We examined the factors that are contributing to the shift in consumer choice in the recent years.

### Study area

This development can be a blessing for local manufacturers. The city of Aba is a hub for artisans and many small and medium enterprises (SMEs). Aba shoemakers are renown across the country for their industry and creativity. They are very good at what they do, but many Nigerians are not ready to patronize them.

### LITERATURE REVIEW

Choice or constraint.

A considerable number of literature exists on consumer behaviour. Over the years, many scholars and researchers have focused on perception as acritical factor in determining the choice of consumers for any product. (Tuan and Rajagopal, 2017, Udonde, 2023, Uduak, et. al 2025). The finding of many of these works agreed that many consumers have poor perception of locally made products (Uduak, et. al, 2025, Zanna & Lawan, 2024, Kitavi, 2022, Osio and Orubu, 2018 Enyia and Emelah, 2018), which directly influence their choice. Factors such as quality, durability, uniqueness, healthy, and pricing are paramount in consumer decisions.

Echebiri et. al (2022) concluded that poor quality of made in Nigeria products has the most influence in the choice/decision of consumers. Many consumers consider Nigeria made products as poor in quality. Borishade et. al (2018), in their research on consumers attitude towards made in Nigeria textile found out that pricing and quality of made in Nigeria textile significantly contribute to customer retention. In the same vein, Zannat et. al (2024) also came to the conclusion that made in Nigeria textiles are considered as inferior and poor in aesthetic compared foreign made ones. There is a long-standing notion that made in Nigeria products are inferior, while this notion subsists and some Nigeria made products are of poor quality, that is not entirely true in all products or goods. This assumption might be based on past experience and overly generalised, some made in Nigeria products have been proven to last longer than imported ones or more nutritious and healthier that foreign alternative.

Uduak et. al in their work highlighted the psychological dimension of consumer attitude, they concluded that perception is the major driving force on consumer attitude. Branding they

opined is a critical factor in consumer decision making. Globalisation and impact of advertising is helping foreign competitors to displace local manufacturers in the market. They suggested that local manufacturers should build up their brand while leveraging on globalisation to push their products beyond Nigeria shores.

Gleaning from available literature, it is clear that the major indices that impact local consumer choice are quality, brand name, social class, pricing, aesthetic, etc. In the past few years that Nigerian economic has witnessed a decline, mass unemployment and the currency has been devalued leading to massive loss in the purchasing power of the local currency (naira), many can longer afford to buy imported goods that used to be their referred choice. A significant number are beginning to turn to locally made goods. The imported goods have gone beyond the reach of many. The long campaign by the various governments to encourage patronage of locally manufactured products are now beginning to yield results.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The study adopted a multi-sectorial approach, using survey method. We used the purposeful and convenient sampling techniques to select our samples. The population of the study were the local shoe makers, the dealers and random customers. These three clusters (shoemakers, shoe sellers and customers) offered better insight into our research objectives sequel to our pilot study. The instruments of questionnaire and in-depth interview were utilized for collection of primary data for the study. A total of 120 questionnaire were retrieved for customers and footwear dealers, while in-depth interview was held with chosen shoemakers. We chose the two big markets in the city of Aba; the Ngwa road market also known as ‘New Market’ (ahia ohuru) and the Ariara international market. We randomly distributed questionnaire to visitors to the market (customers). After identifying the clusters of local shoemakers in Aba, 20 of them were randomly selected we conducted interview with them on the basis of the research objectives.

**Table showing respondents' views.**

	Yes	No	No answer	
Do you patronise locally made footwears?	97(80.8%)	22(18.3%)	1(0.8%)	120
Have you always been patronising locally made footwears?	44(36.7%)	73(60.8%)	3(2.5%)	120
Do you think that the quality of locally made footwears has improved?	87(72.5%)	23(19.2%)	10(8.3%)	120
Do you think that the high cost of foreign made footwears is contributing to increase patronage of locally made ones?	96(80%)	22(18.3%)	2(1.7%)	120
Do you patronise locally made footwears because of the love you have for locally made products?	16(13.3%)	96(80%)	8(6.7%)	120

Source: field data.

From the data presented above, it shows that there is high level of patronage of locally made foot wears, over sixty percent of the respondents. The second question that assesses patronage pattern, shows that majority of the respondents have not always been buying locally made foot wear, over sixty percent of the respondents have not been patronizing locally made foot wears. In probing for the reason behind the shift, three variables were tested; improved quality of locally made foot wears, high cost of imported foot wears and patriotism. Among the three, the high cost of imported foot wears showed greatest impact of over eighty percent, followed by improved quality locally made ones with over seventy percent.

In depth interviews were conducted with the shoemakers in the shoe making clusters within powerline, imo avenue and bakassi area. It was an overwhelming believe of the interviewees that their footwears have gained wide acceptance especially the female footwears. They claimed that they have improved in the quality and finishing of their products. Some claimed that some of their footwears are superior to some foreign made ones. They also said that they export their products to other African countries and beyond. But lamented about the high cost of production. They said that almost all the raw materials they use in producing footwears are imported. They said that the current high cost of forex is making it difficult for them to make profit. Some of them expressed joy that their products have gained wide acceptance and commendation from within and outside the country. They called for more support from the government to help them bring down the cost of production so that they can make reasonable profit. One of our respondents who claimed to have been in the business of shoemaking for over three decades stated that shoemaking is less encumbering and faster nowadays that it

used to be. The stated that almost all the components' parts of the shoe are pre-fabricated and sold in the market, that they only buy and couple them together. He argued that many younger generations of shoemaker are lacking the true skills in shoemaking.

### **Finding**

This study examined the impact of economic recession on patronage of locally made foot wears. From the findings, it revealed that the high cost of imported foot wears has made patronage of locally made ones attractive. It has become a blessing in disguise for the local shoemakers who are experiencing higher patronage since the economic down-turn.

### **Recommendation.**

It is imperative that the government put in place measures to consolidate the gains that has been recorded since the recession as it pertains to locally made goods. Stricter control over importation of foreign made foot wears should be enforced. Materials that are imported for the making of the foot wears should be subsidized in the interim, while local alternative should be sourced and developed in the long term.

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