African Fashion: The Market within Globalization

Fashion globalization occasionally uses the African fashion market to make a quick profit when it becomes trendworthy in Western markets.

This poster explains how non-native producers of African fashion and textiles affect African tailors and textile producers, putting them at an economic disadvantage on the world’s stage.

For my research I utilized numerous databases and resources at the textile library, particularly focusing on the impact colonial traders had on West African regions compared to how modern African textile artists and fashion designers deal with issues of Globalization currently.

Contrast to J.C.’s Penney’s original endeavor into the African clothing market, originally hiring Senegalese manufacturers but moving the production to Pakistan when one moved back to Senegal and another refused to work due to the low pay agreement in the contract.

One example is when the British colonizers introduced their cloth to the Ijo, when this happened the Akwete stopped producing their trademark cloth and widened their looms to compete.

• East Asian appropriation of African textiles such as Kente and Adinkra.
• Western fashion designers of prominence creating “African” inspired collections without any input from actual Africans or completely based on tropes. These actions have had heavy input on the perception and marketing of African fashion.

• Support ethical African designers who hire local and redistribute wealth and opportunity through community initiatives in the African Diaspora.
• If you want Authentic African fabrics, find retailers in the respective country who make them by the original form of production, whether woven or dyed.

What can consumers do?

Things are improving for African fashion designers and textile creators however.

The economic disconnect for the Black Diaspora wanting authentically made African fashions is diminishing, with more clothing being affordable across oceans, designers adapting to the digital forefront, and more groups focused on making responsible clothing and supporting African creators.

Designers and Initiatives to check out:

• XulyBet
• Bele.Bele.Bele
• Duro Olowu
• Ichyulu
• Ethical Fashion Initiative
• Africa Fashion Week
• Solidaridad Network

In my research, I found that the issues of the past are similar to the issues of now, for example:

What is the economic disconnect for the Black Diaspora wanting authentically made African fashions? Diminishing, with more clothing being affordable across oceans, designers adapting to the digital forefront, and more groups focused on making responsible clothing and supporting African creators.