

# MERCHANDISING PRACTICES AMONG ENTREPRENEURS OF BEADED ARTICLES AS A STRATEGY FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN ABIA STATE, NIGERIA.

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## Abstract

*This study investigated the merchandising practices of entrepreneurs of beaded articles in Aba North Local Government Area of Abia State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study determined the merchandising procedures, quantity and frequency of sales of beaded articles as well as the constraints encountered by entrepreneurs in the merchandising of beaded articles. It was a survey research. Population for the study consisted of 185 entrepreneurs of beaded articles in Aba North Local government, Abia State. Purposive sampling technique was used to select 127 entrepreneurs involved in merchandising of beaded articles. Cronbach Alpha was used to determine the reliability of the questionnaire items. A coefficient of 0.92 was obtained indicating high reliability of the instrument. The data were analyzed with frequency, mean and percentages. Findings revealed that majority of entrepreneurs of beaded articles were females whose ages ranged between 29 and 32 years. Majority (85%) of the respondents made whole sales (85%) of beaded articles and employed daily sales forecasting always (68.5%) as merchandising strategies. Inadequate finance, inadequate equipment, low demand, lack of skills and expertise and fashion in vogue were identified among others as problems encountered by entrepreneurs of beaded articles in the study area. Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended that workshop on merchandising of goods should be organized for entrepreneurs of beaded articles in Abia State as a measure for achieving economic development in the country.*

**Key Words: Merchandising, Entrepreneurs, Beaded Articles, Economic, Development.**

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## Introduction

Beads can be made from many types of materials. The earliest beads were made of convenient natural material when found which could be readily drilled and shaped (Leong, 2009; Elizabeth and Sara, 2014). Beads are small pieces of coloured glass, wood or plastic with a hole through the middle which is used for jewelry or decorations (Eunice, 2009). Cole and Budwig (2002) reported that beads are attached to garments or articles of clothing model to make them look beautiful and portable or to add decorative effect on the clothing. According to Susan (2002), beads such as flower vase, table mats, and curtain dividers are used for interior decoration at home. They are also used in making toys. Bead crafts are one of the crafts in the markets today. Most of the beaded craft have lasting effects than the foreign products (Dubin, 1999). Almost all the beads last longer than those produced mechanically, for example, beaded bags retain the colours used on them. They are durable and attractive but the foreign ones wipe away and the surface become dull as they stay more or longer time. Beads are durable. They are used in house decoration. Some of the beaded crafts include table mats curtain or room divider and flower vases (Ferenack, 2009; Ogbene, 2006; Beadie friend, 2009).

An entrepreneur is an individual who undertakes a venture, taking on the inherent risks, with the view of

making financial profit. The individual has the capacity and willingness to manage a business venture, being able to bear the inherent risks and uncertainties and driven by a desire to not only for financial gain but to have a market share of the industry and create a niche for himself (Onuoha, 2010; Okedi, 2012). Merchandising refers to the business of predicting consumer demands and planning production in order to sell goods or services (directly or indirectly), especially to retailers. It is the promotion of goods and / or services that are available for retail sale. Merchandising includes the determination of quantities, setting prices for goods and services, creating display designs developing market strategies and establishing discount or coupons. Therefore, merchandising is any practice which contributes to the sales of products to a retail consumer. In addition to these, a single owner or employee may do all of the planning, buying, receiving, pricing, advertising, displaying and selling (Wolfe, 1989).

Merchandising of beads is one of the valuable skills that can help reduce unemployment in Nigeria. However, researchers and connoisseurs of fashion have over the years shown the potential uses of beads in other dresses and dressing accessories, and artifacts (Hinieski and Corbet, 2006; Kerekhoff, Stephen and Elizabeth, 2001). Merchandising of beaded articles may affect their utilization. The

problem of this study is the determination of merchandising procedure for promotion, marketing and utilization of beaded articles necessary for economic development in Abia State. It was therefore imperative to examine the merchandising practices among entrepreneurs as a strategy for enhancing utilization of beaded articles necessary for economic development in Abia State.

**Objectives of the Study:** The general objective of this study was to examine the merchandising practices among entrepreneurs of beaded articles in Aba North Local Government Area of Abia State.

Specifically, this study:

- i. examined merchandising procedures for promotion and marketing of beaded articles in Abia State.
- ii. determined frequency of sales of beaded articles in Aba North.
- iii. examined quantity of beaded articles sold daily in Aba North.
- iv. determined constraints encountered by entrepreneurs in merchandising of beaded articles in Abia State.

#### Research Questions

- i. What are the merchandising procedures for promotion and marketing of beaded articles in Abia State?
- ii. What is the frequency of sales of beaded articles in Aba North?
- iii. What quantity of beaded articles is sold daily in Aba North?
- iv. What are the constraints encountered by entrepreneurs in merchandising of beaded articles in Abia State?

#### Materials and Methods

**Research Design :** Descriptive survey design was adopted in this study. This was considered appropriate for the study because a part of the population is studied and findings are generalized to the entire population. Survey researches employ interviews and/or questionnaires to determine people's opinion, perception and attitudes of people about issues (Nworgu, 2006). The study adopted this design since it examined the merchandising practices among entrepreneurs of beaded articles in Aba North Local Government Area of Abia State.

**Area of the Study :** The geographical location of this research work is Aba North Local Government Area in Abia State. Abia is bounded on the north and north east by the states of Anambra, Enugu and Ebonyi, to the west of Abia is Imo State, the East and South east are

cross river and Akwa Ibom States and to the South is Rivers State. There are 17 local government areas (LGAs) in Abia State.

**Population of the Study :** The population for this study comprised of 185 entrepreneurial dealers of beaded articles in Aba North Local Government Area of Abia State.

**Determination of Sample Size :** The sample size for the study was 127 (one hundred and twenty-seven) out of 185 (One hundred and eighty-five) entrepreneurs of beaded products in Aba North Local Government Area of Abia State. This was arrived at through a scientific method where Yaro Yamen's formula was adopted. This is mathematically represented thus;

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where n = sample population    1 = constant    N = population = 185    e = degree of error = 0.05 by substitution and computation, this implies;

$$\frac{185}{1+185(0.05)^2} = \frac{185}{1+185(0.0025)} = 126.49 = 127$$

**Sample and Sampling Techniques :** This research work adopted a purposive sampling techniques. Entrepreneurs of beaded articles in Aba North Local Government Area of Abia State were purposively selected.

**Instrument for Data Collection :** One hundred and twenty seven copies of structured questionnaires were used for data collection. The instrument was composed of two parts namely: one and two. Part one obtained demographic information of the respondents which include gender, age, years of experience, level of education and location of respondents. Part two was subdivided into sections B, C, D and E. Section B sought information on merchandising procedures for promotion and marketing of beaded articles in Aba North. Section C obtained information on frequency of sales of beaded articles in Aba North. Section D elicited information on quantity of beaded articles sold daily in Aba North. Section E sought information on constraints encountered in merchandising of beaded articles among entrepreneurs in Aba North.

**Validation of Instrument:** The instrument was validated by two lecturers from Home Science Department, two lecturers from Marketing Department and one statistician from Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike, Abia State. The contribution of validates reflected in the final draft of the instrument.

**Reliability of the Instrument :** Twenty (20) copies of the questionnaire were sampled to entrepreneurs of

beaded articles in Umuahia, Abia State. Cronbach Alpha was used to determine the reliability of the questionnaire items. A coefficient of 0.92 was obtained indicating high reliability of the instrument.

**Data Analysis Techniques** :The statistical tools used for data analysis were frequency, mean and simple percentages (%) frequency was used to organize the data collected. Percentage (%) was used to organize the demographic data of the entrepreneurs as well as research questions one, two and three. Mean was used to analyze the responses to research question four on the constraints encountered by entrepreneurs in

merchandising of beaded articles in Abia State. The mean was calculated by assigning nominal values to the response categories. Strongly agree (SA); Agree (A); strongly disagree (SD); Disagree (D) with values 4, 3, 2 and 1 assigned respectively. Hence, the mean was computed as follows;  $X = \frac{\sum X}{n}$  Which is  $\frac{4+3+2+1}{4} = \frac{10}{4} = 2.5$  The cut-off is 2.5. Values below 2.5 was regarded as disagreed while above 2.5 was regarded as agreed.

**Results**

Research question one: What are the merchandising procedures for promotion and marketing of beaded articles in Abia State?

**Research question two:** What is the frequency of sales of beaded articles in Aba North ?

**Table 2: Descriptive analysis of frequency of sales of beaded articles in Aba North**

S/ N	Frequency of sales of beaded articles in Aba North	Daily(f) (%)	Weekly(f) (%)	Monthly(f) (%)	Quarterly(f) (%)
1.	Earring	69 54.3	12 9.4	31 24.4	15 11.8
2.	Beaded belt	52 40.9	36 28.3	20 15.7	19 15
3.	Table mats	53 41.7	29 22.8	33 26.0	12 9.4
4.	Rings	66 52	35 27.6	18 14.2	8 6.3
5.	Bags and purses	89 70.1	13 10.2	18 14.2	7 5.5
6.	Beaded cloths	39 30.7	8 6.3	29 22.8	51 40.2
7.	Beaded shoes	70 55.1	32 25.2	18 14.2	7 5.5
8.	Waist bead	60 47.2	43 33.9	17 13.4	7 5.5
9.	Hand band	68 53.5	32 25.2	17 13.4	10 7.9
10.	Hair band	59 46.5	24 18.9	16 12.2	28 22.6

Where:

F = frequency  
% = percentage

Findings on Table 2 revealed that majority of the respondents (70.1%) sold beaded bags and purses on daily basis. 29.3% of the respondents sold beaded belts on weekly basis. However, a greater percentage of respondents (26%) sold table mats on monthly basis.

Majority of the respondents (40.2%) sold beaded cloths on quarterly basis. Findings from the study indicated that beaded articles were sold daily, weekly, monthly or quarterly.

**Research question three:** What quantity of beaded articles is sold daily in Aba North?

**Table 3: Descriptive analysis of quantity of beaded articles sold daily**

S/ N	Quantity of beaded articles sold daily	1-5 items f (%)	6-10 items f (%)	11-20 items f (%)	above 20 items f (%)				
1.	Earring	8 0	63	1 0	7.9	2 5	19.7	1 2	9.4
2.	Belt	3 9	30. 7	2 0	15.7	3 6	28.3	3 2	25.2
3.	Table mats	2 6	20. 5	5 1	40.2	3 5	27.6	1 5	11.8
4.	Rings	2 1	16. 5	2 8	22.0	5 6	44.1	2 2	17.3
5.	Bags and purses	31 4	24. 2	1 2	9.4	3 8	29.9	4 6	36.2
6.	Beaded cloths	3 7	29. 1	3 2	25.2	2 5	19.7	3 3	26
7.	Beaded shoes	2 7	21. 3	3 2	25.2	1 6	12.6	5 2	40.9
8.	Waist bead	4 4	34. 6	1 8	14.2	2 6	20.5	3 9	30.7
9.	Hand band	6 9	54. 3	1 6	12.6	3 6	28.3	6 6	4.7
10.	Hair band	3 4	26. 8	1 8	14.2	4 4	34.6	3 1	24.4

Where:

F = frequency

% = percentage

Majority of the respondents sold one to five items of earrings (63%), belt (30.7%), beaded cloths (29.1%), waist beads (34.6%) and hand band (54.3%) on daily basis. A greater percentage of respondents (40.2%) sold six to ten items of table mats on daily basis. Eleven to twenty items of earrings and hair band were

sold by 44.1% and 34.6% of respondents respectively on daily basis. Majority of respondents sold above twenty items of bags and purses (36.2%) and beaded shoes (40.9%) on daily basis. Results from the study showed that varied quantities of beaded articles were sold daily.

**Research question four:** What are the constraints encountered by entrepreneurs in merchandising of beaded articles in Abia State?

**Table 4: Descriptive analysis on the constraints encountered in merchandising of beaded articles among entrepreneurs in Aba North**

S/ N	Possible constraints in the merchandising of beaded articles among entrepreneurs in Aba North	SA (f)	A(f)	SD (f)	D(f)	- X	SD	Remark
		61	39	17	10			
1	Inadequate finance	69	26	18	14	3.19	0.949	Accept
2.	Inadequate equipment	35	34	16	42	3.18	1.050	Accept
3.	Low demand	22	18	60	27	2.59	1.214	Accept
4.	Inadequate selling skills	45	13	58	11	2.28	0.989	Reject
5	Inadequate transportation for movement to isolated areas					2.72	1.044	Accept

Where:

- $\frac{F}{X}$  = frequency
- $\frac{X}{SD}$  = mean
- SD = Standard deviation

Research results in Table 4 revealed that inadequate selling skills was the only item rejected by respondents with a mean of 2.28 as a constraint in the merchandising of beaded articles in the study area while other items were accepted.

**Discussion of findings**

The study revealed that most of the entrepreneurs of beaded products in Aba North are female (66.9%), while only few (33.1%) are male. This could be attributed to the fact that beads are mostly utilized by females and as such generally perceived as a feminine business. This result is in line with Okedi (2012), who stated that majority of entrepreneurs of beaded products in Nigeria are females probably because of the nature of the business. Furthermore, the majority (37.8%) of entrepreneurs of beaded products in Aba North were within the age ranges of 29 years – 32 years, while the minority(3.9%) were within the age ranges of 17 years -20 years. Other entrepreneurs of beaded products in Aba North (32.3%) and (26%) were between the age ranges of 25 years – 28 years and of 21 years -24 years respectively. It is evident that the majority of entrepreneurs of beaded products in Aba North are of ages between 29-32 years. This is a productive age bracket which could be an advantage to their performance. This finding is in line with Onuoha (2014) who reported that the average productive age of entrepreneurs is 30 to 40years. Also, the number of years of experience of entrepreneurs of beaded products in Aba North was within 1 to 9 years of experience. Majority (52.8%) of the respondents had 4 years – 6 years of experiences in production and merchandizing of beaded products while the minority

(14%) of the respondents had 7– 9 years of experience. 52.8% and 36% of entrepreneurs of beaded products in Aba had 4-6years and 1-3 years of experience respectively. This study aligns with the findings of Sandi (2009) who reported that entrepreneurs with more years of experience in their ventures other things being equal performs better than entrepreneurs with less number of experience in the same ventures. Majority (85%) of the respondents indicated that planning for promotion and marketing of beaded articles were merchandising procedures for promotion and marketing of beaded articles in Aba North. The findings of the study are in agreement with the documentation of Wolfe (1989) and Kerry (2016) who stated that a single owner or employee may do all of the planning, buying, receiving, pricing, advertising, displaying and selling as merchandising procedures for promotion and marketing of household goods.

Research results revealed that majority of the respondents (70.1%) sold beaded bags and purses on daily basis. 29.3% of the respondents sold beaded belts on weekly basis. However, a greater percentage of respondents (26%) sold table mats on monthly basis. Majority of the respondents (40.2%) sold beaded cloths on quarterly basis. Findings from the study also indicated that beaded articles were sold daily, weekly, monthly or quarterly as shown in Table 2. The success of bead currency in Africa can largely be attributed to the high intrinsic value Africans placed on decorative items. Social status was easily determined by the quality, quantity and style of jewelry worn, which created the high demand for trade beads throughout the region. This suggests the fact that beads were produced

according to local demand and design (Ferencak, 2009).

Majority of the respondents sold one to five items of earrings (63%), belt (30.7%), beaded cloths (29.1%), waist beads (34.6%) and hand band (54.3%) on daily basis. A greater percentage of respondents (40.2%) sold six to ten items of table mats on daily basis. Eleven to twenty items of earrings and hair band were sold by 44.1% and 34.6% of respondents respectively on daily basis. Majority of respondents sold above twenty items of bags and purses (36.2%) and beaded shoes (40.9%) on daily basis. Results from the study showed that varied quantities of beaded articles were sold daily. Research findings are in agreement with the report of Hinielleski and Corbet (2006) and Ferencak (2009) who documented that merchandising at a retail in-store level refers to the variety of products available for sale and the display of those products in such a way that it stimulates interest and entices customers to make a purchase. Moreover, they have been employed as a unit of exchange in market systems. The very small, symmetrical, kaleidoscopic beads are frequently of great beauty and they are namely arranged and coordinated in some enormous variety of materials. They may be seen in necklaces, bracelets, anklets and as hair decoration.

Research results in Table 4 revealed that inadequate selling skills, indicated with a mean of 2.28 were the only item rejected by respondents, as a constraint in the merchandising of beaded articles in the study area while other items were accepted. Findings on the constraints in the merchandising of beaded articles among entrepreneurs in Aba North are similar to the report of Buchannan (2005); Carol (2010); Fish (2009); Maureen (2008); Sandi (2009) and Oper and Oper (2008).

### Conclusion

Merchandising of beads is one of the valuable skills that can help reduce unemployment in Nigeria. The merchandising practices among entrepreneurs of beaded product in Aba North Local Government Area of Abia State were examined. The constraints in the merchandising of beaded articles among entrepreneurs in Aba North Local Government Area of Abia State were highlighted with a view to developing strategies for improvement.

### Recommendation

Based on the findings of the study, workshops and seminars should be organized for entrepreneurs of beaded articles on the use of modern technology, promotional selling strategy.

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