Utilization of Mannequins in Clothing Merchandizing by Retailers in Anambra State

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Abstract

The study investigated the utilization of mannequins in merchandizing ready-to-wear garments by retailers in Anambra State. Specifically, it determined the availability of mannequins in ready-to-wear garment shops in Anambra State, ways mannequins influence sales of ready–to-wear retail shops in Anambra State, functions of mannequins in merchandizing of ready-to-wear apparels in retail shops. Survey research design was adopted. Population was 820 ready-to-wear garment retailers in the area. Sample size was 110. Questionnaire was used for data collection. Data were analysed using percentage and mean. Findings revealed that flexible mannequin, wooden mannequins were averagely available. Findings reveal availability assorted types of 29 mannequins. They are grouped base-on their style; audience of focus; feature; colour; prose; materials; size and functionality. Availability frequency/percentage (F%) range from F(%) 88(19.7%) to 239(53.6%). Other findings are 18 ways mannequins influence sales of ready-to-wear garments. These include among others, help to draw customers to the ready-t-wear garment shops in order to make a purchase ($\overline{X}$ = 3.87), help to tell what products have arrived and in which store ($\overline{X}$ = 3.85), create a particular atmosphere or give a certain fell ($\overline{X}$ = 3.81). Further findings are 29 functions of mannequins in the shops. These include, among others, showcase merchandise ($\overline{X}$ = 3.04), help retailers to make good choice ($\overline{X}$ = 3.09), and increase the sales of clothing in retail shops ($\overline{X}$ = 3.07).   Four recommendations were made for improving the mannequins clothing merchandizing. Based on the findings of the study, four recommendations were made. These including among others, workshop aqnd seminars should be organized by ready-to-wear garment association on effective utilization of mannequins for advertising ready-to-wear garments to their customers.

Keywords: Utilization, Mannequins, Merchandizing, Clothing, Retailers, Customers, Functionality, Availability.

Introduction

Mannequins are objects used to display articles for the purpose of attracting the attention of customers to business store. Collins (2019) defined mannequins as artificial dolls or dummies used by the retailers to display their merchandises. Mannequins are statement in visual merchandising when it comes to creating unique and eye catching store and window display design (Maier, 2021). Stores use mannequins to define offers, showcase merchandise and boost the brand values, standards and messages that they project and want to be recognised by both royal and new customers. The purpose of using mannequins according to Management Study Guide Team (2019) are to highlight the unique collections of the store, display the latest trends in fashion and influence the customers to buy a particular merchandise.According to Ross (2015) mannequins are used to enhance the store decoration which subsequently improves the shopping experience for customers. Garments can appear in custom- made and ready-to-wear. They are all made to fit people. Custom- made is crafted from a basic pattern and modified based on a handful of measurements.

Ready-to-wear is the term for factory-made clothing, sold in finished condition, in standardized sizes, as distinct from made to measure or bespoke clothing tailored to a particular person's body frame. Ready- to- wear garments are manufactured to accommodate various size ranges. Artteca (2019) described ready- to-

wear as a pieces of expensive garments that are available to purchase at stores, boutiques, high-end department stores and online boutiques and even local market with the help of mannequins. Ready- to- wear garment is designed to provide consumers with pre-assembled apparel, in a range of standard sizes, designed to fit the average consumer. They are produced in standardize sizes, stocked in retail stores, and intended to be worn by the purchaser (Shan, Huang and Qian, 2013). By this definition, people whose measurements are not within the average size will experience difficulty with fit, either in part or in totality, when wearing standard size clothing (Anikweze, 2013).Ready- to- wear garments are available in shop for different age groups with varied colour combinations, up to date styles, latest prints, trims and also suitable for different occasions and seasons. In the past, ready- to- wear garments are purchased by only high income, groups, but now there are abundances of ready-to- wear clothes for various classes of consumers.

Both males and females are involved in retailing ready to wear garments and they make use of various objects and strategies to attract customers to their shops. Customers in this study are people who buy ready-to -wear garments in boutiques, shops, malls or even open places. Mannequins have strong relationship in compelling customers purchase for ready-to-wear garments. Effective use of mannequins by store owners will improve sales and

also help the customers in making right choice of ready to wear garments.

In Anambra State, many people are involved in buying and selling of ready to wear garments and mannequins are expected to be used to provide physical information about purchase and use of products. In the study area, there is a concentration of ready-to-wear retailers as well as customers but most of them are not considering the use of mannequins in buying and selling of their products. Those that manage to have few do not make use of them as they do not understand their usage to attract the attention of their customers. This situation can have serious impact on the customers' choice and the sale of retail store owners.

Customers today are presented with a bewildering array of choices, many ready to wear garments are kept in the shelves in stores without making use of mannequins and experience reveals that such customers do complain that they cannot find what they want. Many customers can be attracted to the shop but if they are met with too much frustration trying to find what they are looking for or, if they encounter only flat and uninteresting displays, they can break their search efforts and the merchandise will not be sold or bought. Therefore the use of mannequins cannot be underestimated as they are tools used by retailers to entire customers to make a purchase.

There is need to display products in a way that will easily catch the attention of the intended customers and thereby enhancing sales. Effective use of mannequins by store owners will improve sales and also help the customers in making right choice of ready-to-wear garments. All these problems call for the need to investigate the utilization of mannequins in clothing merchandizing by retailers in Anambra State hence, the present study.

Purpose of the Study
This study focused on utilization of mannequins in merchandizing ready-to-wear garments by retailers in Anambra State. Specifically, the study determined;
1. availability of mannequins in ready- to- wear garment shops in Anambra State
2. functions of mannequins in merchandizing of ready-to-wear garments in retail shops in Anambra State
3. ways mannequins influence sales of ready-to-wear apparels in retail shops in Anambra State

Hypotheses (HOs)
The following HOs guided the study:
There is no significant difference in the mean responses of male and female ready-to-wear retailers on:
HO₁: the perceived functions of mannequins in the purchase of ready-to-wear garments.
HO₂: influence of mannequins in the purchase of ready- to- wear garments.

Methodology
Design of the Study: The study useda survey design.

Area of the Study: The area of the study was Anambra State. The State has many markets and malls that deal with retailing of ready-to-wear garments. Five major markets located in four major towns in the state include: Onitsha main market, Ochanja market in Onitsha, Nkwo Nnewi market, Eke market Awka and Eke Ekwuloba. There are also shopping malls and boutiques outside markets. Many people in this state are retailers of ready-to-wear garments in aforementioned markets, shopping malls and boutiques. Onitsha main market is however the largest market and the focus of the study.

Population of the Study: The population for this study comprised 798 ready-to-wear garment retailers, in Onitsha main market. This was made up 500 male and 298 female ready-to-wear registered garment retailers (Association of fancydealers, an affiliate of Onitsha Market Traders Association {OMATA} 2021). The minimum education level of the retailers is first school leaving certificate while the maximum qualification is Ph.D degree.

Sample for the study: A purposive sample of 110 ready-to-wear garment retailers was selected for trhe study. Only those relaiters who: had been in the business for at least on year, displayed their artices with mannequins and, were willing to participate in the study were selected.

They were 75 and 35 male and female relaiters respectively.

Instrument for Data Collection: The instrument for data collection was structured questionnaire. It has 76 items. It was developed based on the specific objectives of the study and literature review. It had a 4-point rating scale of strongly agree (4), agree (3), disagree (2), and strongly disagree (1). The instrument was face-validated by three university expert in clothing and textiles. The reliability was determined using Cronbach alpha. A reliability coefficient of 0.88 was obtained.

Method of Data Collection: A total of110copies of the questionnaire were distributed to the respondents by hand with the help of three trained research assistants. Only100 copies were retrieved. This shows 90.91 percent return rate.

Data Analysis Techniques: Frequency count and percentage were used specific purposes No 1. A cut-off point of 50 percent and above ($\geq$ 50%) implies "average availability" while below 50 percent ($\leq$ 50%) implies "low availability". Mean and standard deviation were used for specific purposes Nos. 2 and 3. A mean rating of 2.50 or above ($\bar{x} \geq 2.50$) was regarded as "important" while a mean less than 2.50 ($\bar{x} \leq 2.50$) was regarded as "not important".

RESULTS

Table 1: Frequency and Percentage (F %) Responses on Availability and Types of Mannequins in Ready-to Wear- Garment Shops in Anambra State

S/N	Types of Mannequins Available in Garment Shops	Available (Frequency)	(%)	R
A	**Mannequins by Style**			
1	Abstract mannequins	119 (26.7%)	26.7	*LA*
2	Headless mannequins	141 (31.6%)	31.6	*LA*
3	Realistic mannequins	88 (19.7%)	19.7	*LA*
4	Mini mannequins	141 (31.6%)	31.6	*LA*
B	**Mannequins by Audience**			
5	Child mannequins	146 (32.7%)	32.7	*LA*
6	Female mannequins	124 27.8%)	27.8	*LA*
7	Male mannequins	116 26.0%)	26.0	*LA*
8	Pregnant mannequins	121 2701%)	27.1	*LA*
9	Plus size mannequins	116 26.0%)	26.0	*LA*
C	**Mannequins by Feature**			
10	Flexible mannequins	203 (45.5%)	45.5	*AA*
11	Inflatable mannequins	130 (29.1%)	29.1	*LA*
12	Hanging mannequins	140 31.4%)	31.4	*LA*
13	Table top mannequins	142 31.8%)	31.8	*LA*
14	Muscular mannequins	156 35.0%)	35.0	*LA*
D	**Mannequins by Colour**			
15	Black mannequins	109 24.4%)	24.4	*LA*
16	White mannequins	141 (31.6%)	31.6	*LA*
17	Gold mannequins	154 (34.6%)	34.5	*LA*
18	Chrome mannequins	116 (26.0%)	26.0	*LA*
E	**Mannequins by Prose**			
19	Sexy mannequins	129 (28.9%)	28.9	*LA*
20	Sports mannequins	124 (27.8%)	27.8	*LA*
F	**Mannequins by Materials**			
21	Wooden mannequins	239 (53.6%)	53.6	*AA*
22	Fabric mannequins	123 (27.6%)	27.6	*LA*
23	Glass mannequins	128 (28.7 %)	28.7	*LA*
24	Silver mannequins	131 (29.4%)	29.4	*LA*
G	**Mannequins by Size**			
25	Full size mannequins	123 (27.6%)	27.6	*LA*
26	Half size mannequins	123 (27.6%)	27.6	*LA*
H	**Mannequins by Functionality**			
27	Dress form	120 (26.9%)	26.9	*LA*
28	Ghost mannequins	129 (28.9%)	28.9	*LA*
29	Training mannequins	139 (31.2%)	31.2	*LA*

F= frequency; % = Percentage; LA = Low Availability; AA = Average Availability; R = Remark

Table 1 shows a total of 29 assorted types of mannequins that are available in the ready-to-wear clothing shops in the markets in Anambra state. Table 1 also shows that none of the mannequins obtain 100 percent availability score. The Table further shows that two types of mannequins are "averagely available" scores (≥ 50%), while 27 types of mannequins are "low in availability" (≤5 0%).

Table 2: Mean Responses and Standard Deviations of Retailers (male and female) on the Influence of Mannequins on Ready-to-Wear Retail Shops in Anambra State

S/N	Influence indicators of Mannequins	$\overline{X}_1$	SD₁	$\overline{X}_2$	SD₂	$\overline{X}_g$	t-test	R
	Mannequins:							
1	increase customers emotional engagement on garment	3.03	.886	3.06	.890	3.04	.648	*Agree*
2	promote up-selling for retail shops	2.98	.835	3.04	.775	2.99	.963	*Agree*
3	attract customers to the ready to wear shop	2.98	.827	3.05	.825	3.04	.370	*Agree*
4	help in the promotion of brand and its sales	3.02	.740	3.01	.822	3.05	.999	*Agree*
5	showcase products so that customer can buy easily	3.02	.786	2.91	.828	3.04	.562	*Agree*
6	help to draw customers to the ready to wear garment shops in order to make a purchase	3.02	.780	3.07	.767	3.87	.867	*Agree*
7	give free publicity of the stores collection	3.06	.788	3.02	.809	3.06	.210	*Agree*
8	add value to the displayed merchandise	2.98	.785	3.01	.819	3.05	.546	*Agree*
9	draw attention to the collection of the shop and lure customers to buy	3.00	.754	2.89	.743	3.07	.697	*Agree*
10	enable customers to analyse all the aspects of the garment before entering the store	3.00	.806	2.97	.817	3.08	.081	*Agree*
11	impress customers and promote sales	3.00	.790	3.05	.818	3.06	.371	*Agree*
12	help to show what the store can deliver to the customers	3.01	.758	3.02	.848	3.24	.262	*Agree*
13	are guiding light to a particular area of the store	3.01	.862	2.82	.855	3.01	.430	*Agree*
14	act as an aspect of the interior design of the store.	3.03	.802	3.04	.850	3.27	.642	*Agree*
15	enhance the ambience and traits of the store.	2.96	.898	3.03	.779	3.06	.246	*Agree*
16	help to tell what type of cloths and customers the store will accommodate	2.99	.822	2.82	.760	2.99	.380	*Agree*
17	help to tell what products have arrived and in which store	2.92	.785	3.07	.844	3.85	.950	*Agree*
18	create a particular atmosphere or give a contain feel	2.97	.764	3.02	.777	3.81	.368	*Agree*

$\overline{X}_1$ = Male retailers; $\overline{X}_2$ = Female retailers; $\overline{X}_g$ = grand mean; SD₁ = Male retailers; SD₂ = Female retailers; t-value; of response of male and female Ready-to-wear Retailers

Table 2 reveals that all the 18 items had their mean values ranging from 2.82 to 3.07. These mean values are above the cut-off point of 2.50 indicating that all the 18 items are the influences of mannequins the sales of ready-to-wear retail stores in Anambra State.

Table 3: Mean Responses of Retailers (Male and Female)on the Perceived Functions of Mannequins in Ready to Wear Garments Shops in Anambra State

S/n	Functions of Mannequins	$\overline{X}_1$	$\overline{X}_2$	$\overline{X}g$	t-test	Remarks
	Mannequins:					
1	showcase merchandise	2.90	3.02	3.04	.607	*Agree*
2	helps retailers to make good choice	3.08	3.06	3.09	.632	*Agree*
3	compel people to buy more on impulse	3.03	2.99	3.05	.305	*Agree*
4	help people to visualize how the garment will look on them	3.02	3.07	3.92	.388	*Agree*
5	trigger an emotional purchase response on potential customers	3.05	2.82	3.08	.491	*Agree*
6	helps in promoting easy up-selling opportunities	3.02	3,06	3.05	.159	*Agree*
7	increase the sales of clothing in retail shops	3.03	2.98	3.07	.217	*Agree*
8	as non-personal communication to communicate to customers	2.97	3.04	3.03	.462	*Agree*
9	serves as advertising tools for ready- to- wear garments shops	3.04	3.02	3.06	.814	*Agree*
10	help customers to understand the product such as ready to wear garments	3.05	2.92	2.99	.527	*Agree*
11	improve the power of attraction of their displays/offerings	3.05	2.89	3.08	.828	*Agree*
12	improve the look of the ready-to-wear garment stores	3.03	3.05	3.09	.084	*Agree*
13	represents a diverse source of embodiment in ready to wear garment stores	2.92	3.07	3.06	.331	*Agree*
14	help stores to increase sales and patronages	2.96	3.06	3.05	.416	*Agree*
15	create brand awareness	2.98	3.02	3.08	.394	*Agree*
16	boost the brand values	2.99	3.07	2.92	.416	*Agree*
17	help customers have higher aesthetic response and approach and lower perceived risk to wearing clothing	2.95	2.82	3.08	.930	*Agree*
18	inspires a customer to purchase a complete outfit	3.00	3.06	2.99	.340	*Agree*
19	boost customers' confidence about the product	3.00	2.90	3.04	.132	*Agree*
20	highlight the very best assortment	3.02	3.01	3.09	.705	*Agree*
21	attract customers to the ready-to-wear garment shops	2.89	3.05	2.98	.492	*Agree*

No		x_1	x_2	x_g	t-value	Decision
22	make it easy to demonstrate entire outfits rather than simply single items of clothing	3.03	2.98	3.04	.815	*Agree*
23	gives customers chance to interact with the sellers	3.03	3.04	3.09	.387	*Agree*
24	help to offer more fashion choices for customers	3.05	3.07	3.08	.608	*Agree*
25	show shoppers some things they cannot see easily elsewhere	3.07	2.90	3.06	.528	*Agree*
26	give customer a better shopping experience	2.97	2.99	3.08	.829	*Agree*
27	create a more welcoming shopping environment in an easy manner	3.01	3.02	3.04	.085	*Agree*
28	give potential fashion designers style inspiration	2.92	3.08	3.09	.341	*Agree*
29	provide fit information	2.99	3.01	3.08	.418	*Agree*

x_1 = Male retailers; x_2 = Female retailers; x_g = grand mean; t-value; of response of male and female Ready-to-wear Retailers

Table 3 reveals that all the 29 items had their mean values ranging from 2.90 to 3.92. These mean values are above the cut-off point of 2.50 indicating that all the 29 items are the perceived functions of Mannequins in ready to wear garments shops in Anambra State.

Discussion of findings

The findings of the study reveal that some types of mannequins are averagely available while some are low in their availability in ready to wear garment shops in Anambra State. Some of these mannequins that are low in availability in ready to wear garment shops are: headless mannequins, realistic mannequins and black mannequins, mini mannequins, female mannequins, male mannequins, pregnant mannequins, plus size mannequins, inflatable mannequins, and chrome mannequins, child mannequins, flexible mannequins, hanging mannequins, table top mannequins, muscular mannequins, and white mannequins. The finding of the study on availability of mannequins in ready to wear garment shops also agreed with the submission of Valerie (2015) that retailers make different types of mannequins such as realistic, abstract, headless, plus size, pregnant, children and teen, sexy, sport, black, chrome, gold, other colour, dress forms, ghost or photograph, flexible, torso, standalone, parts and display mannequins available in their shops to define offers, showcase merchandise and boast the brand values ,standards and messages that they project and want to be recognised by both loyal and new customers. The findings of the study also were in consonance with the opinion of Mannequin Small Report (2016) that use and availability of some categorises of mannequins depend on locations and size of the ready to wear garment shops. Many types of mannequins according to Vember 2021 include headless mannequins, abstract mannequins, realistic mannequins, plus size mannequins among others.

According to Gonzalez, Meyer and Toldos (2021) mannequin play an important role in fashion sales, consumers undertake an imaginative

visioning process in which they mentally anticipate the fit and look of the displayed fashion clothing. Mannequins are artificial human body capable of attracting customers to a garment stores (Maire, 2021). Using mannequins can improve the power of window displays and sales of garments.

The findings of the study revealed 18 influences of mannequins on the market output of ready to wear retail stores. Prominent among the influences include sales increase when customers engage on an emotional level, mannequins promote up-selling for retail shops, mannequins attract customers to the ready to wear shop, mannequins help in the promotion of brand and its sales, shops use mannequins to showcase their products so that customer can buy easily, mannequins help to draw customers to the ready to wear garment shops in order to make a purchase, mannequins give free publicity of the stores collection, and mannequins add value to the displayed merchandise. This opinion is in support of Lindstron, Berg, Nordalt and Roggeveen (2015) who stated that mannequins have become an important visual merchandizing element in retail stores due to their ability to catch the attention of potential shoppers and virtually provide fit and style information. This opinion also is in support of Management Study Guide Team (2020) that mannequins highlight the unique collections of the store, display the latest trends in fashion and influence the customers to buy a particular merchandise. In the opinion Kiron

(2022) mannequins attract the customers into the store and thus increase the revenue and profit responsible for upselling of the retail stores. In support of the finding, Kember (2021) states that mannequins have the ability to spark personal recognition in a client base, and thus serve as a way for customers to see themselves reflected in the shopping experience.

The findings of the study revealed 21 functions of mannequins in ready-to-wear garment shops and they include retailers using mannequins to showcase merchandise, helping retailers to make good choice, compelling people to buy more on impulse, helping people to visualize how the garment will look on them, triggering emotional purchase response on potential customers.

The finding of the study agreed with the opinion of Ross (2015) who defined mannequins as an object use to enhance the store decoration which subsequently improves the shopping experience of customers. The finding also agreed with the opinion of Collins (2019) that mannequins are artificial dolls used by the retailers to display their merchandise. Mannequins play an important role in usual merchandizing the mannequins perform functions of being used by retailers to draw the attention of customers to stores. The finding of the study was also in agreement with the opinion of Reach (2021) who stated that mannequins impact customers by giving them a look to aspire to. This shows that consumers have positive perception of the clothing on display.

Karin (2017) also stated that mannequins show what clothes, accessories, and products look like and give customers a better view of the style, fit, and silhouette of the products. By displaying items in realistic human form, the mannequins catch the eye of the customers and inspire them to buy.

There was no significant difference in the mean responses of male and female ready-to -wear retailers on the perceived functions of mannequins in the purchase of ready to wear garments. The findings of this study was in agreement with the findings of Shealy (2016) who examined the effect of mannequins type on consumers purchase decisions and found out that there was no significant difference between the responses of male and female retailers on perceived functions of mannequins in the purchase of ready-to-wear garments. The implication of this finding is that the level of retailers' experiences and knowledge did not significantly influence their opinion on the functions of mannequins in the purchase of ready to wear garments.

Conclusion
Many individuals are involved in selling ready-to-wear garments in Anambra State, using various types of marketing and advertising objects such as mannequins. The use of mannequins in the sale of ready-to-wear garments is expected to draw the attention of customers which in turn help product purchase. In the study area, there is a concentration of ready-to-wear garment retailers as well as customers but most of them, are not considering the use of mannequins and store image in buying and selling of their product. Those that manage to have few do not understand their usage to attract the attention of their customers. The situation poses serious impact on the customers' choice and the sales of retail store owners. Some of the mannequins available in ready-to-wear garment shops include abstract mannequins, headless mannequins, realistic mannequin, female mannequins, male mannequins among others. Garment sellers should consider all these mannequins to boost sales. Some of the influence of mannequins on ready-to-wear retail shops are increase customers emotional engagement, promote up- selling for retail shops, attract customers to ready-to-wear shops among others. Some of the perceived functions of mannequins in ready-to-wear garment shops include to showcase merchandise, help retailers to make good choice, compel people to buy more on impulse among others. Finally, conclusion was drawn that garment sellers should utilize mannequins to improve sales.

Recommendations
Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:
1. Workshop and seminars should be organised by ready-to-wear garment associations on effective utilisation of mannequins for advertising ready to wear garments to their customers
2. Home economics lecturers in schools and colleges can

incorporate findings of this study in textiles and clothing programme

3. All the findings of this study should be implemented by read-to-wear garment retailers to improve sales.

4. Ready-to-wear garment sellers should make use of mannequins to catch the attentions of potential customers/buyers to their shops.

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