

# **Effects of Non-Verbal Communication in Apparels: Opinion Survey of Adult Public Perception of the Secret Language of Jeans in Asaba Urban Delta, Nigeria**

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## **Abstract**

This study examined the effects of non-verbal fashion communication: Opinion survey of adult public perception of the secret language of Jeans in Asaba Urban, Delta, Nigeria. Qualitative and Quantitative methods were used to elicit information. One thousand two hundred (1200) questionnaires were administered and collected. A sample of 400 respondents was drawn from three categories of adults; students, artisans and traders residents in Asaba urban Delta. Data were explored using the statistical packages for Social Science (SPSS) version 2.0 to test for the variation observed in wordless fashion communication. The results revealed that jeans symbolizes references and is accepted by both male and female in the Asaba. It symbolizes social interface (58.33%), cultural context (64.84%) and enhance identity (66.66%). Finally, jeans clothing conformed human body and perceived as a product of identity. This study also revealed that wearing of jeans among the adults has communication modes, social and cultural implications. Generally, perceptions held by Asaba urban residents reflect different value system among demographic strata.

**Keywords:** Adult, fashion communication, Jeans, non-verbal

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## **1. Introduction**

Jeans fashion is a product of clothing and a type of culture hybrid used across cultures. Clothing is used to convey many facets of a person's social identity, socio-economic status, gender, religion and occupation (Kodzoman, 2019). Clothing is a language of nonverbal communication that through its symbols conveys much about the wearer (Mona Mohamed *et al.*, 2022). It's a transmission of information through symbolic messages (Todorovic *et al.*, 2014). Similarly, Tajuddin (2018) regarded jeans as *prima- Donna* of fashion. Miller & Woodward (2012) also affirmed the worldwide use of jeans. Thus, jeans as a product of clothing can tell information and about social identities. Symbolically, it represents membership of a particular group (Steffen, 2009). Thus, clothing not only shows our appearance but also represents our interior world (Todorovic et

al.,2014).What we wear says a lot about a person. It differentiates people of lower class and higher by expressing their personality. Jeans clothing was first produced for the Genoese Navy because of its durability and worn comfortable while swabbing the deck. Also, Jeans clothing is an inseparable part in human social nature, and accepted as modern clothing and casual clothing in United States of America, Europe and other parts of the world where individual are considered as positively equal.

However, values may differ in other social context. Jeans denote several meanings within a particular social context for example, wearing of Jeans in the Asia or America continents may mean different things with regards to jeans worn in African cultures. Jeans clothing provides a pictorial understanding into the lifestyle of a specific social environment. Presently, both the eastern and the western world wear jeans as fashion which varies in terms of color, brands and style. Thus, the non-verbal communication accompanied with jeans clothing is an integral aspect that conveys, a range of social instruction. Therefore, the intent of this work is to explicitly conduct a perceptive public opinion survey of non verbal fashion communication among adults of the secret language of jeans in Asaba urban area of Delta State, Nigeria.

Despite the facts that clothes are peculiar to culture, the non-verbal communication of jeans apparel has become a ubiquitous aspect of modern fashion with individuals using jeans to convey subtle messages about their personality, status and values. However, the secret language of jeans remains largely unexplored. Also, lack of understanding the meaning and interpretations attached to different jeans style, colors, and designs stifle personal expression. More so the growing popularity of jeans among adult in Asaba, its concomitant implication on cultural value and identity perpetuating harmful gender norms. Several factors might influence the ubiquitous use of jeans in Asaba. This is worrisome and raises important questions about the role of non-verbal communication in shaping social perception and interactions.

It is against this backdrop that this study seeks to conduct a perceptive opinion survey of non-verbal fashion communication among adults of the secret language of jeans in Asaba Urban area of Delta State, Nigeria. The specific objectives of this study are; to identify the various meanings and interpretations associated with different jeans styles, color and designs among adults in Asaba. Also to examine the relationship between jeans apparel and social perceptions among adults in

Asaba. Others are; to determine the extent to which the ‘secret language of jeans’ influences social interactions and relationships in Asaba and to find out the cultural and social influences that shape perceptions of jeans as a form of non-verbal communication among adult in Asaba. This study is significant for the reasons outlined below:

- i Studying nonverbal communication focusing on the context of jeans can reveal valuable insights into human social interactions, cultural dynamics, and individual identity expression.
- ii It will help us to know our cultural values, norms, and attitudes. For example, jeans may represent rebellion and individualism in one culture while symbolizing casualness and comfort in another.
- iii Studying nonverbal communication through jeans can provide insights into how individuals use clothing to communicate identity without saying a word.
- iv It will aid in the connotative meanings of Jeans clothing for example, bikini for young generation is sexy, classy but the older generations, bikini is considered as indecency.

## **2.0 Literature Review**

### **2.1 Conceptual Definitions**

#### **Jeans and Types**

Jeans have become an increasingly global form of dress and are worn by all ages. People of different genders, sex-qualities, social classes, religion and races wear jeans. Jeans convey intrinsic information about the wearer and serves as a reflection of period. Jeans is a type of sturdy cloth which symbolizes rebellion among teenagers from the subculture. Research shows that jean fabric originated in Nimes, France during the middle Ages (Howard, 2011). Jeans are most common clothing in our closet regardless of the time; place or manner in which you choose to wear them in late 1940s jeans clothing became associated with youth culture and as fashion designer labels. Later in 19th century, Jean changed from the rugged work wear fashion to the stylish wide leg jeans for men and low-rise hip hugger jeans for women which are now popular in the youth market.

#### **Language Semantic of clothing**

Language is a type of communication, sharing of ideas, transfer thoughts and other activities through words. Language in clothing can be interpreted as denotative and connotative. More so, connotative meaning is about feelings; while the denotative meaning of jeans is regarded as casual clothing. Also, denotative

and connotative meanings are acceptable signs that consistently communicate meaning of a word.

### **Jeans Clothing Fashion as Modalities of Communication**

Clothing can communicate and influence one's mood (Tiggemann *et al.*, 2009). Clothing fashion conveys information that moves the audience to act or think. Jean fashion can be used to influence audience. Jeans fashion is a product of clothing that expresses who we are and what we value. Jeans fashion a product of clothing performs the basic modes of communication i.e. interpretative functions by transmitting information between individuals using sets of behavioral symbols and signs. It communicates individual popularity and status through appearance and presentation. It is interpersonal though non-verbal cues displayed in clothing like display of body shape through a tight jean to attract opposite sex.

### **Non – Verbal Communication**

Nonverbal communication encompasses all body language communication. A communication that is not limited to the use of words but by means of facial expression, gestures, eye contact, posture, tone of voice, bodily contact, spatial behavior, clothes and any other aspects of appearance and smell (Larsson, 2014) Nonverbal communication plays a crucial role in conveying our thoughts, emotions and intentions more effectively than words, for example our facial can convey a wide range of emotions like happiness ,sadness, fear and surprise expression Also, nonverbal cues provide information about a person's mood, feelings and attitude.

## **2.2 Empirical Literature Review**

### **Social Psychology of clothing**

Clothes are powerful signal to our peers and strangers projecting the self image, we want to display (Dunne, 2010). Jeans may be regarded as cue for sexual signals creating attractiveness in today society for both genders. It gives vivid description of us. Individual expresses their feelings through clothing (Sullivan *et al.*, 2017). Clothing communicates hidden secrets that exert powerful influences on our self perception and confidence. Clothing improves our image and influences the wearer's mood (Gurney *et al.*, 2016). For example, security uniform may indicate safety (Civile & Obhi, 2017). Furthermore, clothing colour conveys value attitudes, personalities or individuality (Wolfe, 2012). Similarly, Adam & Golinsky (2012) reported that when clothing is worn it has symbolic

meaning to the wearer and also has behavioral consequences. Howlett *et al.*,(2015) study of subtle clothing changes participants rated women as less competent when their blouses were unbuttoned as compared to buttoned. Also, Graff *et al.*,(2012) and Murnen *et al.*,(2013) research shows that women in provocative clothing are rated less competent. Whereas it is clear in their findings that dressing provocatively can indeed have negative consequences and right combination of clothing project power. Sontag& Lee (2004) study the importance of body image in relation to clothing. They affirmed that body image may affect clothing behavior and clothing may affect body image and self-feelings.

### **Synopsis of various Secret Languages of Jeans Clothing**

Jeans is a product of clothing, widely utilized by people of every age, colour, sex, race, profession etc. Jeans is fashionable and various style variation include drop Crotch Jeans, Taper Jeans, Regular legs, Wide leg Jeans, Hip – Huggers, High waist and Low waist Jeans, Boy friend Jeans, Dad Jeans, Flare Jeans, Bell – bottoms, Skinny leg jeans, Saggy Jeans, printed jeans, painted jeans, patched jeans and embroidered jeans, all communicate information and have different effects on the wearer and the eyes that sees them. Jeans are provocative wears that reveals sexuality and repel attraction of the opposite sex. The fitness influences the body image revealing bodies as targets of objectification; body appearance and true self. The social attractiveness of jeans transforms the wearer signaling individual status. The comfort it brings to wearers suggests casualness from childhood – adulthood of all ages and by all professions. The symbol and labels at the back pocket signal social association of class/groups. Also, colors in Jeans clothing communicate attractiveness or unattractiveness (Kodzoman, 2019) and enhance visual aesthetic appearance. Color defines wearer and develop symbolic meaning (Brannon, 2010) and cue for sexuality and seductive. Generally, color affect attractiveness and give sensitive indication in social context. Several studies have regarded jeans clothing as a significant aspect of nonverbal communication with different styles and designs conveying different messages. Roberts *et al.*, (2010) research findings revealed that clothing color affects attractiveness.

### **Perception of Jeans Apparel**

A person self identity determines the clothing preference and use. Jeans clothing affect individual impression differently because the information it communicates differs. Some viewed jeans as fashionable and attractiveness in the social context. Others see it as business attire worn in important place as a person work identity (Kang *et al.*, 2011). More so, some perceived jeans clothing as stereotyping,

discriminating and imitating social hierarchy. Jeans clothing can reflect power between groups; a subliminal advertising between gender. Other perceptions include national identity, economic, social and political stands promoting awareness that affect individual life. Slepian (2015) research finding shows that wearing formal clothing is related to psychological formality and social distance, while casual clothing is related to intimacy and familiarity. Individuals are believed to use clothing to define and communicate their social identities to others (Asenjo, 2014). Thus, people who wear formal clothing are regarded more competent and rational than those who wear casual clothing. Holmlund *et al.*, (2011) reported that older women prefer fabrics with good quality, good finish, comfortable fit and suitable fabrics for their shape. On psychological dimensions, Au Lam & Ho (2016) studied older men and women in terms of fashion attribute in Hong Kong and pointed out that older men had a significant lower preference for vibrant colours than older women.

### 2.3 Theoretical Framework

The study is based on Social Identity theory. The concept intersects in the realm of human interactions. Social identity theory posits that individuals define themselves based on their membership in social groups and use this social group's membership to shape their self concept and behavior. The theory is propounded by Tajfel and John Turner in 1979 and it consists of three main components; First the cognitive which deals with the process of categorization where individuals group themselves and others into social categories race, gender and nationalities. Second the Affective Components which involves the emotional investment in ones group membership that leads to loyalty and attachment. Third is the Evaluative component this is often accompanied by a desire for positive distinctiveness and a need to maintain or enhance ones social status. Social identity theory strength relies on the ability to shape individual self-esteem and their desire for positive distinctiveness. Also, critics argue that social identity theory oversimplifies complex social dynamics and allow the scope is too wide that it may not fully capture the specific contexts. Islam (2014) affirmed that "individuals define their own identities with regard to social groups and such identifications work to protect and bolster self-identity".

Social identity theory (SIT) is highly relevant to the study particularly in the context of Group membership. Jeans can be a symbol of a group membership with different styles or brands signifying affiliation with specific social groups. In the context of identity expression, Jeans can express one's identity, values and social

interest. Also, Jeans can be a form of nonverbal communication revealing the wearer's personality, social status, group identity dynamics and cultural expression

### **3.0 Methodology**

#### **Study Area**

The geographical location for this research is Asaba, capital of Delta State with a population of 149,603 (National Population Commission, 2006) having a metropolitan population of 500,000 people. The study will focus on the adult residents in Asaba with special emphasis on the following; adult undergraduate students in Dennis Osadebay University, Asaba, traders and artisans were selected for the study. These categories of participant were chosen because of their varied interactions in different social context allowing them to be in position to provide reliable data and exhaustive qualitative insights in the study of Jeans as nonverbal communication.

#### **Research design**

The study adopted the survey research design to investigate the non-verbal fashion communication; opinion survey of adult public perception of secret language of jeans in Asaba Urban Delta, Nigeria. Questionnaire was used as an instrument for data collections containing specific items related to the study. Also, questionnaire was administered face to face among adult residents of Asaba within duration of three weeks.

#### **Population of study**

Population of the study comprises of adult, within the category of 18 and 40yrs for both Male and Female who resides in Asaba urban, Delta, Nigeria. A total population of 199,746 was selected showing the number of male as 101,287 and female 98,459 (National Population Commission 2006).

#### **Sample Size Selection**

Four hundred was calculated using the Yemane formula (1967) to determine the sample size for this study and calculation procedure of Odedede (2022) was adopted.

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

N = Sample size

n = Population size

e = Level of precision at 95% confidence

$$199,746 / 1 + 199,746 (0.05)^2$$

$$N = 199,746 / 199,747 \times (0.0025)$$

$$199,746 / 499.3675 = 399.9 = 400$$

### Research Instrument

A total of four hundred (400) questionnaires were self-administered to adults' male and female undergraduates in Dennis Osadebay University (75 for each of the categories), traders (100) and artisans (150) in Asaba Delta State, Nigeria. The questionnaire copies were structured into two parts. The part A contains the demographic variables of respondents, while part B consisted of questions regarding the substantive issues of the research.

### Data collection

Questionnaire was used as the instrument for data collection

### 4. Data Presentation and Discussion

Data elicited from the questionnaire was analyzed with the Statistical Package for Social Science version 2.0. The result was presented in form of mean and percentages to test the variation observed in non-verbal fashion communication: opinion survey of adult public perception of the secret languages of Jeans in Asaba urban Delta, Nigeria.

**Table 1:** selected respondents in Asaba urban Delta, Nigeria

Respondent	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Students	150	37.5
Artisan	150	37.5
Traders	100	25
Total	400	

**Table 2:** Social demographic variables of respondents

Sample Size	400
<b>Sex</b>	
Female	233 ( 58.25 )
Male	167 ( 41.75)
<b>Age</b>	
18years	100 ( 25.00)
20-25	167 (41.75)
25-30	133 (33.25)
<b>Occupation</b>	
Student	167 (41.75)
Trader	120(30.00)
Artisan	113 (28.25)
<b>Marital Status</b>	
Single	150 (37.50)
Married	120 ( 30.00)
Cohabiting	130 (32.50)

Source: Responses from the questionnaire

**Table 3:** What identity formed a status for wearing jeans?

S/N	Description	Percentage (%)
1	Do jeans fashion from ones identity or social class Yes No I don't know	220 (55.00) 57 (13.25) 123 (30.75)
2	Do wearing jeans makes persons trendy Yes No I don't know	200 (50.00) 150 (37.50) 50 (12.50)
3	Does wearing jeans stick ones out from other and show originality Yes No I don't know	213 (53.25) 110 (27.50) 77 (19.25)
4	Do wearing of jeans forms individual nationality Yes No I don't know	250 (62.50) 117 (29.25) 33 (8.25)

5	Do wearing jeans form individual economic status Yes No I don't know	197 (49.25) 137 (34.25) 66 (16.50)
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Source: Responses from the questionnaire

**Table 4:** How effective do jeans transmit non-verbal communication?

S/N	Description	Percentage (%)
1	Do jeans clothing inform others our personal and collective affinities? Yes No I don't know	167 (41.75) 116 (29.00) 117 (29.25)
2	Do jeans clothing enhance appearance? Yes No I don't know	234 (58.50) 83 (20.75) 83 (20.75)
3	Do jeans clothing gives wordless signals? Yes No I don't know	183 (45.75) 144 (36.00) 73 (18.25)
4	Do jeans clothing to draws sexual attention? Yes No I don't know	73 (18.25) 210 (52.50) 117 (29.25)
5	Do jeans clothing enhance identity? Yes No I don't know	267 (66.75) 68 ( 16.00) 67 (16.75)

**Table 5:** How do adult perceive jeans fashion?

S/N	Description	Percentage (%)
1	Does jeans cloths gives negative impression ? Yes No I don't know	200 (50.00) 133 (33.25) 67 (16.75)
2	Do jeans clothing give practical reaction? Yes No I don't know	217 (54.25) 117 (29.25) 67 ( 16.75)
3	Do wearing jeans cloths make individual feel well, dress and current? Yes No I don't know	193 (48.25) 90 (22.50) 117 (29.25)
4	Does jeans clothing influence mood? Yes No I don't know	217 (54.25) 90 (22.50) 93( 23.25)
5	Is jeans clothing considered as immodest? Yes No I don't know	143 (35.75) 107(26.75) 150 (37.50)

Source: Responses from the questionnaire

**Table 6:** What is the symbolic reference of jeans in contemporary society?

1	Do jeans clothing symbolize social interface?	
	Yes	233(58.25)
	No	97 (24.25)
	I don't know	70 (17.50)
2	Do jeans replicate ones appearance?	
	Yes	157 (39.25)
	No	103 (25.75)
	I don't know	140 (35.00)
3	Do jeans perceived as a cultural context?	
	Yes	148 (37.00)
	No	133 (33.25)
	I don't know	119(29.25)
4	Is jeans clothing seen as a denial of social class?	
	Yes	
	No	177 (29.25)
	I don't know	113(28.25)
		110 (27.50)
5	Do jeans clothing represent juvenile?	
	Yes	93(23.25)
	No	90 (22.50)
	I don't know	217 (54.25)

Source: Responses from the questionnaire

### Discussion of Findings

Three categories of adult were selected from the Asaba urban Delta for this study. Four hundred questionnaires were distributed each for this selected category making it a total of 400 questionnaires that was administered. Majority of the respondents were male (58.25%) and female (41.75%). This shows that male respondents wear jeans trousers more than female respondents. This also signifies that jean trousers connote masculinity. Also, the study present three different age groups 18years (25%), 20 -25 (41.75%) and 25-30years (33.25%). This indicates that the respondents between the age 20-25 have high preference for jean clothing. The study also revealed the occupation of the respondents' student

(41.75%), Artisan (28.25%) and Trader (30.00%). This indicates that majority of the respondents' were students with an average percentage of 41.75%. More so, the marital status of the respondents shows that single (37.50%), married (30.00%) and cohabiting (32.50%). These also affirmed that respondents were mostly single (37.50%). Furthermore, section B the study explains the following research questions.

Research questions carried out to examine what identity form a status for wearing jeans established that the respondents accepted that wearing jeans forms ones identity, (55%) makes one trendy (50%) show originality (53.33%) from individual nationality (62.5%) and forms individual economic status (49.25%). These indicates that jeans are widely embraced (Asenjo, 2014) as part of Asaba social/ cultural wears and a classic symbol. Also, result on question related to how effective do jeans transmit non-verbal communication shows that jeans give wordless signals (45.75%) and collective affinities (41.75%). Jeans enhance appearance (58.50%) and enhance identity (66.75%). These give a positive impression that a jean communicates and gives non-verbal signals. More so, the result for question on how adult perceived jeans fashion shows that jeans can be perceived in different ways. Respondent agreed that jeans can give negative impression (50%) and practical reaction (54.25%). Jeans makes individual current (48.25%) and influences mood (54.25%). It can also be perceived as immodest. The result confirmed versatility of jeans cloths and the different meaning which it connotes.

Further, result on the symbolic references of jeans in contemporary society revealed that jeans is symbolized as social interface (58.25%) as cultural context (37.00%) replicate appearance (39.25%) as a denial of social class (29.25%) and as juvenile (23.25%). This reinforces the fact that jeans clothing is a symbolic product. From the foregoing it is obvious that jeans represent democratization conformed to human body. Generally, accepted by everyone, a symbol of comfort and perceived by adult as a product of identity.

## **5. Conclusion**

The study provided insights on how jeans fashion, a product of clothing that transmit meaningful non-verbal signals. Generally, jeans clothing were accepted by the three categories of adults (undergraduate students, artisans and traders) in the Asaba urban Delta as a social fabrics.

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