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Repurposing Arabic Gum for Actors Characterization in Theatre, Film and Television Productions

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Abstract

The theatre, film and television world is a make-believe world where actors are transformed into the characters they are impersonating in the presence of an audience with the aid of cosmetics for the purpose of informing, entertaining, and educating their audience. It is however disheartening, to note that in Nigeria, most of the standard makeup kits and equipment utilised in the transformation of actors are scarce because they are imported products brought into the country at exorbitant rate. In view of this challenges, Arabic gum; a very useful ingredient in food, pharmaceutical and medical industries was investigated and processed through extraction, dissolving, mixing, fermentation and filtering methods as a viable alternative to foreign theatre adhesive products used for attaching hair pieces such as beards, moustaches, side burns on actors. The effectiveness and reliability of the indigenous invented Arabic gum Adhesive was tested on 150 actors on both stage and screen in 4 productions through control and experimental groupings(the control group represents actors tested with foreign make-up products while the experimental group were actors on whom Arabic gum adhesive was applied) and the data collected from questionnaires administered on the 150 actors was subjected to descriptive statistics using histograms, pie-charts, percentage, mean and chi-square. The findings revealed the efficacy, relevance and durability of the Arabic adhesive as a viable substitute to imported adhesive products in actors' characterisation on both stage and screen.

Keywords: repurpose, Arabic gum, actor, theatre, film, television and production

Introduction

From time immemorial, cosmetic products have always been used as an indispensable art in the communication of human experience to the audience because they are used to transform actors on stage. In the contemporary Nigerian theatre and film productions, however, it is disheartening to note that the foreign conventional make-up materials and equipment necessary for proper actors characterization are largely unavailable due to their scarcity. In view of this observation, make-up scholars and practitioners such as (Diminas, 2011), and (Nwachukwu, 2012) have consistently expressed their dissatisfaction in interviews, articles and even on set about lack of access to requisite vocational materials. To substantiate this position, (Oshionebo and Abodunrin 2010) and (Faniyan, 2012) lamented that "the standard make-up kits are not available for use in production in schools and universities, not that they are not in the world market, they are expensive to procure". Subsequently, this makes the teaching of make-up courses appear cumbersome and less attractive to students who eventually opt out of the programme unfulfilled.

Consequently, the potential and prospects of the craft and its practitioners are not fully explored in both educational and professional theatres. In this regard, Agonifo, (2011), and Ezeagugh, (2015), variously emphasized that the Nigerian theatre and film industry are technically ill-equipped to meet the demand of the global practice. Therefore, there is an urgent need to positively turn around the trend, for growth and sustainability of this craft through the creation of locally produced theatre make-up from the Nigerian environment, since theatre anywhere in the world more often than not derives its impetus from its society. To this end, Arabic gum was investigated and processed as effective, relevant and reliable make-up product for attaching actors' hairpieces such as beards, moustaches and sideburns among others in order to substitute the foreign exorbitant theatre adhesive in actors' characterization on stage.

Methodology

Identification of the Formulated Arabic Theatre Adhesive

This new product was considered as substitute to theatre, film and television make-up adhesive namely; Spirit Gum, Pros Aide, latex, Bond Gel, and Silicon Rubber to mention a few. It was designed specifically for affixing different hair pieces such as crepe hair, beards, moustaches and some prosthetics materials that are employed in special effect make-up for partial or total transformation of actors in the depiction of their characterisation to the audience. The raw materials used for this product were sourced locally and generally predicated on natural ingredients and recipes essentially extracted from plants.

Ingredients and Materials

Gum Arabic as many as possible depending on your demand, Soya bean glycerine , Knife , Water , Bowl , Net or cloth filter, Funnel, Glass Jar.

Method

Extract the Gum Arabic from tree with knife and place in a bowl. Pour warm water over it until the gum dissolves in water. Then pour

Soya-bean glycerine oil slowly over the mixture and put in a jar. Cover the jar tightly to prevent evaporation. Place the jar in a dark area or cup-board. Shake the content of the jar every day to prevent clumping. Keep the mixture for three or four weeks, check the mixture after three weeks to observe if it has reached the desired consistency. If not, allow the mixture to stay for an additional week, filter the liquid from the mixture with net filter to extract as much liquid as possible into a container. Finally, store the content in a bottle with funnel and cover for use.

Descriptive Statistical Analysis

The descriptive statistical analysis method was also conducted in this study using structured questionnaire. Actors were divided into experimental and control groups on both stage and screen. The newly invented Arabic gum adhesive was applied on the actors in the experimental groups while the imported theatre adhesives were used on the actors in the control groups before structured questionnaires were randomly administered to them, so as to access and empirically measure the information of performers on the effectiveness and viability of the newly created Arabic gum adhesive make-up after their application. The questionnaires in question are self-structured questionnaires; their writing designs are conversational, yet concise, and appropriate for the targeted audience. The questionnaires were divided into two sections, A and B. Section A was the Bio-data, which included the demographic and socio-economic characteristics of the respondents which asked the questions on age, gender, ethnicity, level of education, name of production, location of the production, and vocation of performers.

On the other hand, Section B of the questionnaires focussed on the effectiveness of indigenous Arabic gum adhesive make-up on the respondents, and questions such as, did the adhesive material make you look closely like the character you portrayed? And did the adhesive material wear off easily under light? Among other relevant questions are incorporated into design of the questionnaire with multi-choice answer options from which the respondents could conveniently choose from, in order to obtain useful information about the study.

Application of Newly Invented Indigenous Arabic Theatre Adhesive

The application of the aforementioned make-up products was experimented in three different modes to determine their effectiveness, relevance and reliability on stage and screen. The experimentation processes are discussed as follows:

Application of Arabic Theatre Adhesive on Stage

The application of the newly invented Arabic gum adhesive were also engaged in the live theatre productions of the department of the Performing arts PFA499 Special Project Fiesta, These productions are Aadoye by Steve James and Our Husband has Gone Mad Again by Ola Rotimi on the 26th and 28th May, 2012 respectively. In this particular experiment, 60 members of Aadoye production were selected by the researcher out of the cast list and evenly

split into the 30 control and 30 experimental group for the experiments. At the same time 40 members of the Our Husband has Gone Mad Again were selected and evenly divided due to the small size of the cast members in the production. After the selection, the local and foreign theatre make-up products were given to the make-up artists of each of the productions to apply on the aforementioned actors before the production started. This was done to comparatively analyse the performance of the local and foreign products on the actors, so as to make objective assessment about the relevance, reliability and effectiveness of the new indigenous Arabic gum adhesive product.

Plate 1: A respondent projecting his role on Stage in *Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again* Production with the Arabic theatre Adhesive amongst other visual effects

Application of Arabic Theatre Adhesive on the Screen

The Arabic theatre gum was also experimented in two home-video productions. Namely: “Pemisire” by Layi Amao and "Kidnapped" by David Jones on the 5th and 7th of January, 2013 respectively in Lagos and Ogun State locations. In the study, the control and experimental group assignment were conducted with 30 artistes from "Kidnapped" production and 20 artistes from “Pemisire" in order to comparatively ascertain the authenticity of the newly produced make-up products

Plate 2 : Make-Up Artist Applying Arabic Gum Adhesive Make-up on a respondent in “Pemisire” Production

Plate 3**:** The Main Character in "'Pemisire" Production, after the Application

Results and Discussion

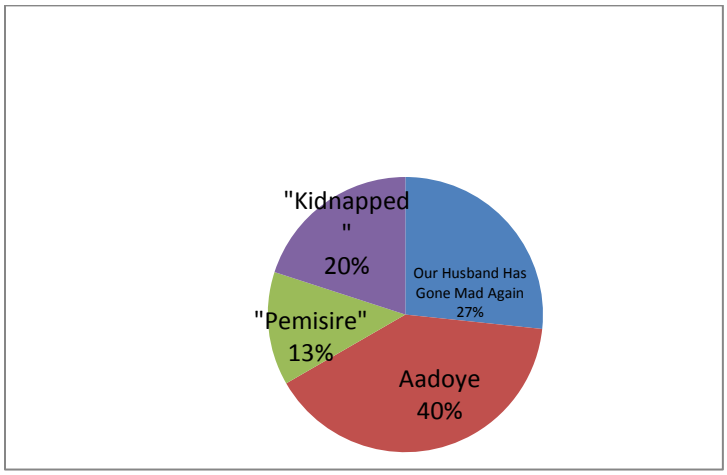

Fig. 1: Name of Productions and the distribution of respondents

Fig. 2: Distribution of the respondents of imported and indigenous Arabic Gum Adhesive Make-up

Figure 1 showed the name and number of drama/film productions used in this study and the percentage of actors in each of the productions, while Fig.2, indicated the

distribution of the actors into control and experimental groups in each of the productions before the application of the imported and Arabic gum adhesive make-up.

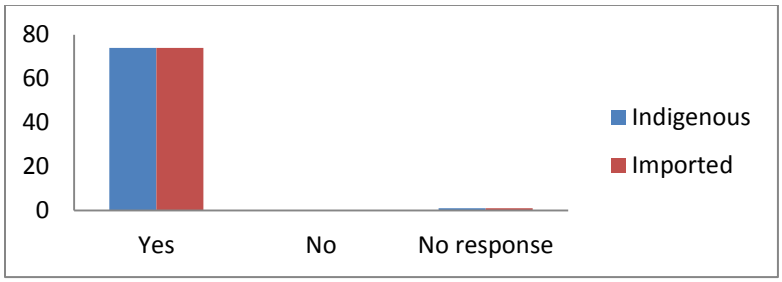

Fig. 3: Assessment of the Make-up Products on characters

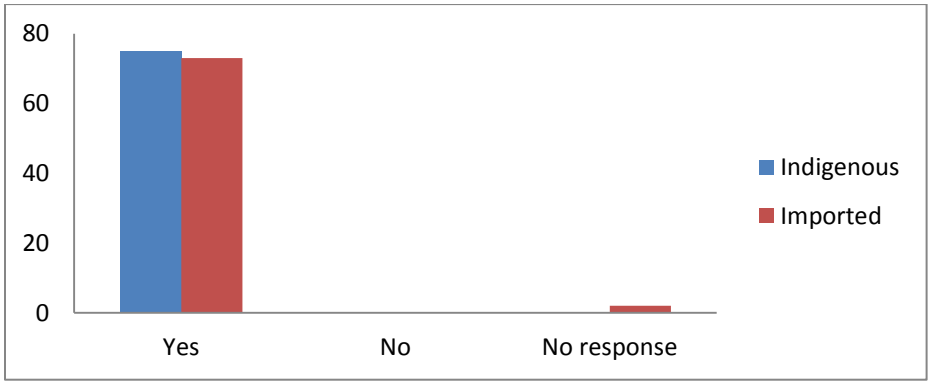

Fig. 4: Assessment of make-up products on the enhancement of costume

Comparative analysis of the application of the invented indigenous Arabic gum adhesive and foreign theatre adhesive products was done on actors using descriptive statistics. Fig. 3 showed that 98.7% asserted that the imported adhesive products enhanced the portrayal of their roles to the audience, at the same time, 98.9% of the respondents alluded to the fact, that the locally made Arabic gum adhesive properly characterized their roles and the theme of their productions to the audience, this substantiated (Corson, 2019) submission that a good make-up product must be able to convey actors roles and messages successfully to the audience. Also, in Fig.4, the importance of a harmonious synergy between costume and make-up for a successful play production was highlighted (Ezeagugh, 2015). This is because 99.3% of the respondents claimed that the imported adhesive products enhanced their costumes while100% of the actors agreed that the meaning of their costumes was well-communicated to the audience with the aid of the indigenous Arabic gum adhesive make-up.

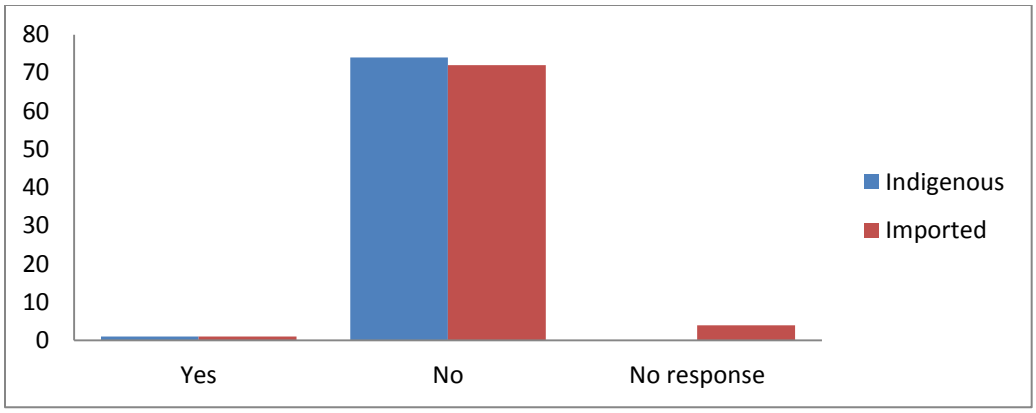

Fig. 5: Stability/wear off of make-up under light

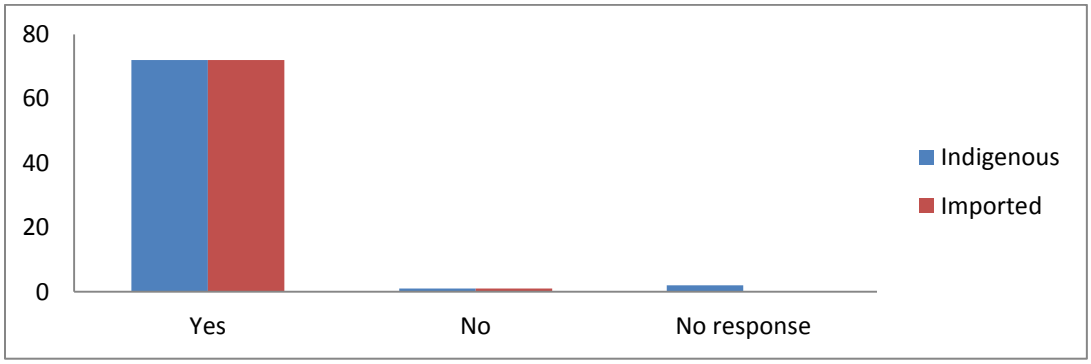

Fig. 6: Effect of the Adhesive make-up on production

As shown in Fig. 5, majority of the respondents (98.7%) noted that Arabic gum adhesive did not wear-off easily under light regardless of the high intensity of the lighting equipment while 1.3% disagreed. For the imported theatre adhesives, 97.5 % of the respondents claimed that the imported adhesive make-up did not wear off under light , whereas only 1% asserted that it wore off and 1.5% has no response. The report is an indication that the Arabic adhesive makeup has the capacity to attach hair pieces on actors under light for a long period of time without removing because of its strong viscous strength (Ardelshifa, 2017). In addition, Fig.6, also highlighted that majority of the respondents (96.0%) attested that the concept of the production was well projected by the Arabic gum adhesive and 1.3% respondents claimed that the concept of the productions was not well projected by the make-up while 2.7% has no response. On the contrary, 95.7% said that the concept of the productions was well projected by imported adhesive make-up while 2% disagree and 2.3% did not respond. From the foregoing, it is obvious that Arabic gum adhesive has been able to project to a large extent, the concept of the productions to the audience, in line with (Davis and Hall, 2017) submission on the significance of effective make-up application and the communication of production concept to the audience.

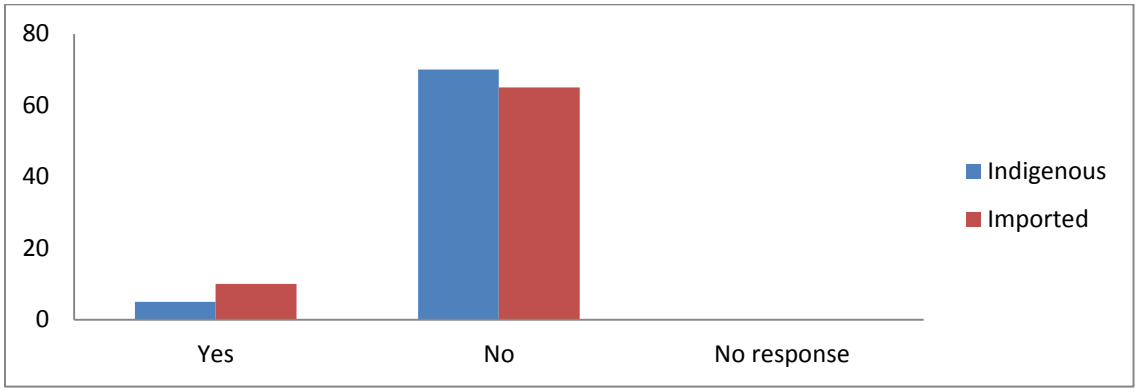

Fig. 7: Evaluation of the side effect of the Adhesive make-up

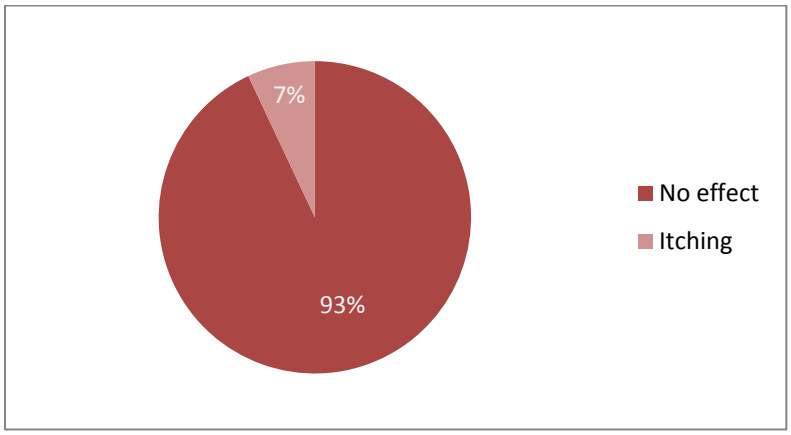

Fig. 8: The side effects of the indigenous Arabic gum product

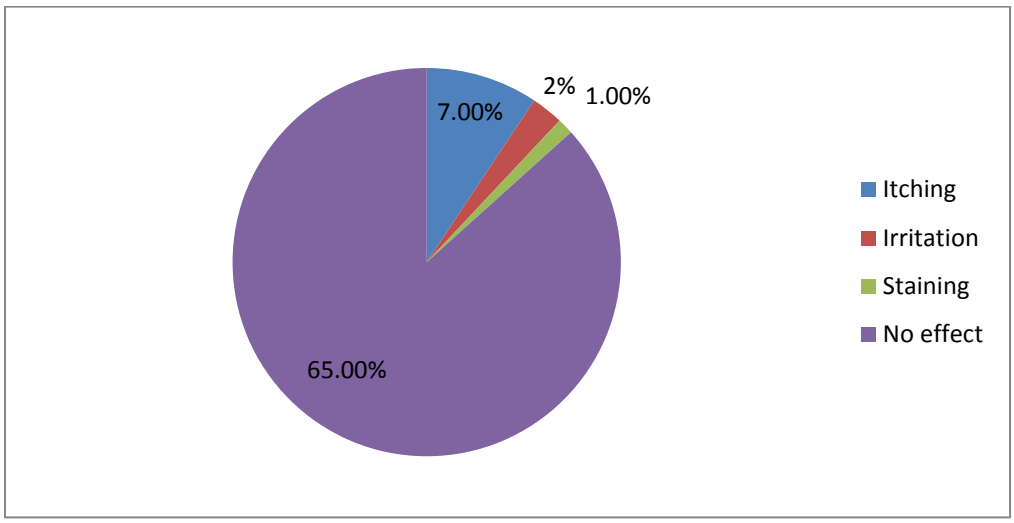

Fig. 9: The side effects of the imported Adhesive products

Also, as reflected in figs.7, 8&9, the side effect of imported make-up products are more than the indigenous Arabic gum adhesive make-up. From Fig.10, 93% of the

respondents admitted that the Arabic gum adhesive has no side effect on their skin while 7% consented to the fact that, it caused itching on their skin. On the contrary, in Fig 12, 65% of the respondents claimed that the imported adhesive make-up products had no side effect on their skin, while 7% attested to itching of the skin, and 2% agreed to skin irritation effect of some of From all the results of the data analysis, it is clear that the newly invented indigenous make-up product is effective, reliable and valid. This means that it can efficiently substitute the foreign theatre make-up products in the characterization of actors in the theatre, film and television productions. According to the U.S Department of Health and Human Services 2013, the use of make-up in Performing arts could pose hazards for the performers and make-up artists if not safely selected, applied and removed. The ingredients for the newly invented indigenous Arabic gum adhesive theatre make-up product were carefully and safely selected. They are natural materials not harmful to the body. Gum Arabic which is the major ingredient, has a good reputation and promising effect as anti-cancer (Nasir *et al.*, 2010), immune modulatory (Xuan *et al.*, 2010), anti-malaria (Ballal *et al.*, 2011) and anti-oxidants agents (Ali *et al.*, 2013; Kaddam *et al.*, 2017). This could have contributed to the reduction in the side effects on the respondents while the imported product showed more side effects.

Furthermore, excellent properties of Gum Arabic such as higher solubility, viscosity, binding, stabilizing, thickening and emulsifying (Ardelshifa, 2017) could be responsible for the indigenous product not the products while 1% submitted that one of the products stained their costumes. The analysis above is an indication that the indigenous Arabic gum adhesive has very low incidence rate of allergic reaction on human skin. This indicates that the skin can tolerate it without much sensitivity, which makes it a good cosmetic product for actors' characterization (Okoro *et al.*, 2010). wearing off easily under light, this complemented its ability to effectively project actors' costumes and the concept of production to the audience, which makes the invented indigenous Arabic gum adhesive make-up a good substitute for the imported one.

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