



ACCESSORISE ALL AREAS

Business owner and sewist, Ade Ogbomo, makes beautifully bright accessories to fill a gap in the market.

Written by Rachel Avery

A GOOD READ

You could credit Ade Ogbomo's then seven-year-old nephew for providing the light-bulb moment of her big business venture. He asked why he couldn't have a bright bow tie just like his auntie's African print outfit – not only a very good question, but also the catalyst for Ade spotting a significant gap in the market. After whipping up quite a few bow ties, in varying colours and prints for her nephew, he soon became a mini style icon at their local church.

Everyone was asking where they could get their hands on a smart tie in a traditional printed fabric. And that's how the brand GabeJade (gabejade.com) was born.

The origins of Ade's flare for crafting, like many successful sewists, comes from her childhood. It was actually her grandmother who initially taught her how to sew. "She taught me how to replace buttons and fix tears when I was little and I was so excited to perform these tasks," reminisces Ade.

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"Later, when I became a first-grade teacher, when the kid's buttons would come off, they would think I was a superhero when I actually could fix it for them."

CULTURAL INFLUENCES

From her grandmother's simple sewing techniques, to her nephew's fashion quandary, family was at the heart of what kickstarted the brand, officially launching in 2017. And today, family is still a recurring

theme in the ethos of the brand. "Back home in Nigeria, everyone is family and culture oriented – we believe love should be at the centre of everything you do," says Ade. So it's no

coincidence that GabeJade's brand photography is brimming full of family life: "Our photos often include individuals smiling and having fun with their family and friends, because we have matching sets for families, friends... and even your fur babies" – check out the adorable dog bandanas!



(Left) Ade's happy place is her craft room. (Above) The three-layered pre-tied bow tie – fourth image down – is Ade's favourite item, and the first thing she learned how to make!

ADE'S TOP TIPS FOR ACCESSORY CRAFTING

Here are some handy tips to get you started if you're wanting to sew your own accessories.

- 1 Make sure to iron the pieces you are sewing, iron every step of the way. It makes everything neater and easy to sew.
- 2 Measure everything, never just try to estimate a fit.
- 3 Always correct your sewing mistakes, don't just assume you can fix it later.
- 4 Pay attention! Sewing smaller pieces means it's easy to injure yourself or completely ruin a piece if you aren't very careful.
- 5 Use interfacing as it helps make small items more stable and sturdy.



(Top right) Coordinating his and hers accessories are very popular. (Right) Matching accessories for families reinforce the values that are at the core of the GabeJade brand. (Below right) Ade always has a happy, smiling model for her shoots.

GabeJade is a celebration of Ade's Nigerian heritage: "I want to share a piece of my culture with others." This is done beautifully by using striking ankara fabric sourced from Nigeria and other parts of Africa to create statement accessories. Their increasingly popular headwraps are a hit with women of all ages, and they have even released YouTube tutorials about how best to wrap and style them to show off the amazing prints.

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CUSTOMER CARE

With epic ties and headwraps, it's only natural that GabeJade has become a one-stop-shop for incredible occasion-wear accessories. When wedding bells are on the horizon, brides, grooms, and even guests turn to Ade to find something special, and she reveals that they do "lots of bespoke designs for weddings" so people can get their dream pieces in the perfect prints.

Ade enjoys crafting for both men and women but does confess that "men's items are more intricate and complex than women's items. Traditional men's items such as ties, bow ties, and lapels take much more time, patience, and work than women's headwraps and scarves." A necktie, for example, can take

Ade over an hour to craft to perfection.

The humble beginnings of sewing bow ties for neighbourhood church-goers has taught Ade to listen to customer wants and needs and let that gently navigate the range. "We've recently received a lot of requests for neckties for bigger, taller men, so we would like to begin making longer ties," she shares.

On the topic of happy customers, when asked who would be her dream celebrity to design for, there was no hesitation for Ade:

"Rihanna. Not only is she a celebrity who loves to give back, she is also a fashion icon who makes everything look a million times better than it already does!" Will Smith and

Pharrell Williams are also on the 'dream to dress' list – and we think they would both look rather dapper in a GabeJade bow tie.

PHOTO FABULOUS

In the modern marketplace, it's not enough to just make incredible items, having a strong online presence to promote your products is also key. Take one look at the GabeJade Instagram feed (@gabe.jade) and you will get a feel for their shining brand identity. Just like the fabrics that are used they are dedicated to being bold, bright, and playful. "Social media helps people discover the brand, in turn bringing me more customers and opportunities," reveals Ade. She takes the marketing seriously too, "I learned photography solely to ensure my social pages were full of crisp, clean, professional images."



And that level of dedication clearly converts into swathes of pleased customers as their social channels are now awash with people sharing snaps sporting the wonderful accessories they have purchased. No matter how frequent, this positive attention still astounds Ade: "Wow! When people tag us, I feel accomplished and appreciated. It feels like all the hard work is paying off."

The fine craftsmanship is a big part of what keeps customers smiling: "We put a lot of work into hand sewing each item and packing them neatly in sturdy boxes that our customers refer to as 'gift-ready'." Ade strives for perfection at all times and reveals her biggest sewing lesson to be: "Every little stitch matters. When you mess up, it is imperative that you correct your mistakes!"

Another important sewing lesson for newbies from Ade is: "Always be open to learning new things. Remember that you've never, ever 'mastered' sewing, there's so much to learn and know. Be open to watching tutorials on YouTube, asking close friends and family for advice and researching."

CRAFT ROOM ESSENTIALS

We asked Ade what accompanies her sewing stash to make the perfect workspace.

DALGONA COFFEE. Ever since it became popular a few months ago, I HAVE to have one every day. Not only is it pretty, it gets the day going for me.

MY DOG, DAMI. She's my five-year-old terrier mix who literally follows me everywhere. Dami is short for Damilola, which is a Nigerian name meaning 'blessed with wealth'. She likes to lie in her bed and watch me sew or sniff out my snacks.

MY SPEAKER. I literally listen to music all the time, whether I'm cooking, showering, working or just relaxing. I can't get anything done without music. I mostly listen to old and new R&B, soul, and rap.

MY CAMERA. I love my camera, I like to have it nearby at all times. I like to document my work progress and the finished products.

SNACKS. Sometimes I sew for hours and every now and again I need a snack to keep me going. My favourite snacks are fruits, granola, and nuts – healthy things that won't weigh me down or make me feel lazy.

