

Samuel Okopi

Samuel Okopi's AREWA TEES Seek to Make Peace & Unity Fashionable



The spirit of unity is not limited to those sharing a similar geographical location or culture. **Samuel Okopi** an indigene of Benue State Nigeria who is making great strides in Kaduna State, Nigeria, firmly believes this. With an MSc in Architectural Design from Ahmadu Bello University Zaria, running a clothing business may seem to an onlooker like more than a slight deviation from his path until he lets you in on his passion for fashion.

It is impressive to see young men with vision and drive for making profits. But even more impressive is seeing one with the passion not just to create a lifestyle brand but also to inspire and project peace and great deeds.

Here Comes the Serial Entrepreneur

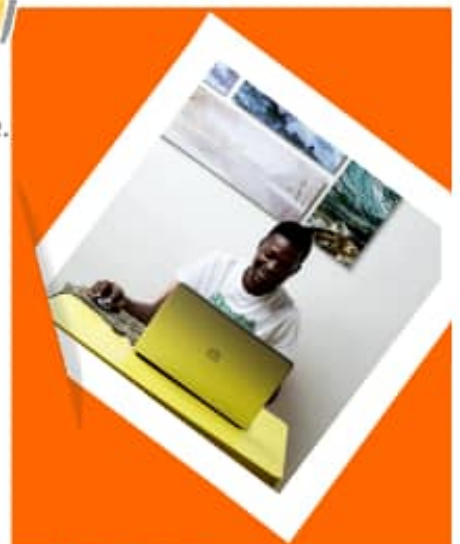
I am what people would call a serial entrepreneur. I was involved in a series of businesses before I struck gold at my fifth attempt when I defied the odds and created A.R.E.W.A Tees which is a clothing brand based in Kaduna. A.R.E.W.A stands for African Republic of Essential Wears & Accessories and we make T-Shirts, Hoodies and other types of casual wears for customers in different parts of the country. As the founder of a start-up enterprise, I wear many hats in the business operation. I double as the Head of Design and Social Media expert for A.R.E.W.A Tees.

Peace is the Inspiration

The major idea that inspired me to start A.R.E.W.A Tees was an introspection of who I was as a person and how I loved to project peace. It just came to me one time that the North has been plagued with a lot of issues such as religious conflicts, ethnic conflicts and terrorism. So I thought to myself "why not use casual wears to preach the message of peace?"

Beginnings

I began A.R.E.W.A Tees in 2016 after I pulled funds from my personal savings and also with the support of family and friends I was able to raise enough capital to kick-start. Since then, the brand has been focused on satisfying our typical customers who are based in Northern Nigeria, and who love casual and comfortable wears, as well as anyone who loves to connect with the northern culture and heritage.



SOCIAL MEDIA CONTACT:

-  Facebook
-  Twitter
-  Instagram

The Itzinya Effect...

I was opportune to enrol at Itzinya Start-up Academy in 2017 where I got a profound insight into creating the right structure for my business. Itzinya helped me validate some of the assumptions I had and also exposed me to new ideas and concepts. Take for instance; I learnt a lot about personal productivity, the value proposition canvas, and the business model canvas. Just getting to know these concepts helped me to plan my business better and to project activities and develop relationships and customer service much better. Before I went through Itzinya, I had no staff, but right now A.R.E.W.A Tees boasts of 2 full-time staff and about 5-6 contract staff that involve photographers, models, printing assistants.

How We Stand Out

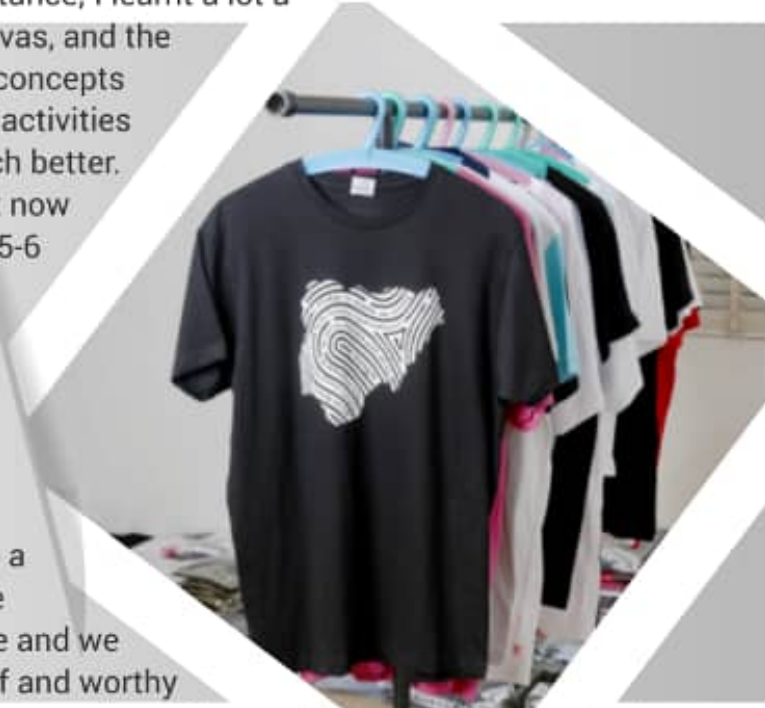
Even though it is not news that there exists a steep competition in the T-shirt design industry, A.R.E.W.A Tees has been able to stand out because we provide a lifestyle option by the way we position the brand. We inspire people to connect with their roots and culture and we project Northern Nigeria as something to be proud of and worthy of export to other parts of the world. As the A.R.E.W.A Tees brand is growing and making good sales, we are constantly committed to ploughing back the revenue we gain into the business to build both the brand and the company.

Planning Our Spread

In our determination to grow the brand and to place A.R.E.W.A. Tees products in the hand of every customer, we have co-opted additional distributors here in Kaduna (where we have our showroom). We also have several trusted distributors in Yola, Adamawa State, Jos, Plateau State and we are currently in talks to have distributors in Kano State and in Abuja, as we have a lot of our customers there. Running this business has taught me certain lessons. One is that, indeed customer service is very important and the customer is truly King. Sufficiently addressing a customer's issue is the key to customer satisfaction and revenue generation. The second is persistence and consistency. This is because as simple as it may appear, the apparel business is quite difficult. A lot of the raw materials needed are not readily available so the entrepreneur must be committed to going out of his way to source for them.


Challenges, Yes. But We Have Strategies Too

Our biggest challenge is difficulty in always meeting the specification of customers in terms of sourcing the T-Shirts. This is because some of our customers want their T-Shirts in a certain colour, or size or style. And unfortunately, since we source our T-Shirts from the open market, they rarely have all the specifications that our customers want. Due to this, we hope to start producing some of the T-Shirts we use so we can produce them according to our specifications, instead of just relying on buying from the market. We also desire to create more designs that will appeal to not just northern Nigeria but to the whole of Nigeria and even beyond making it a global brand that reaches international and local markets, but retaining its northern roots nonetheless.



SOCIAL MEDIA CONTACT:

 Arewatees

 Arewatees

 @arewatees