

Homemakers' Awareness of Sources of Consumer Information on Selection of Family Goods and Services in South-East, Nigeria

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Abstract

The study investigated homemakers' awareness of sources of consumer information on selection of family goods and services in South-East of Nigeria. The specific objective was to determine the levels of awareness of sources of consumer information for selecting goods and services. The research question and hypothesis formulated in line with the objective were used for the study. The population of the study was 1031 which was also the sample size for the study. The study used descriptive survey design. A questionnaire titled sources of consumer information awareness was designed and used by the researcher for data collection. The data was analysed using mean and standard deviation, while simple linear regression was used for the hypothesis. The result revealed the overall mean of 2.54 signifying influence on homemakers' selection of goods and services ($R^2 = 140$, adjusted $R^2 = .121$). Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that levels of awareness of sources of consumer information had significant influence for homemaker's selection of family goods and services. It is therefore recommended that monitoring team set up by the state government should check the activities of consumer agencies to ensure that they do their jobs; home economic extension workers should mount workshop/seminars to enlighten homemakers on the sources of consumer information and their importance in decision making for family purchases. This can also be done through conferences and village meeting.

Keywords: Awareness, Sources of consumer information, Selection, Family Good and Services, Homemakers

Introduction

Sources of consumer information include the agencies that are formulated by the government to provide rules and regulations guiding the sale of goods and services in the market place. These agencies also protect the rights of consumers during purchasing of goods and services. Producers and retailers inform consumers about their goods and services through advertising, packaging and other accompanying documentation such as instruction booklets or leaflets before or at the time of purchase. Websites and social media have become increasingly used as sources of consumer information (European Commission Staff Working Document, 2011).

A well packaged product must contain label information. Tailor and Wilkening (2008) stated that the major objective of labeling packaged foodstuff is to guarantee that consumers have access to complete information on the content and composition of products. This is to enable them make the right decision that will protect their health and interest while purchasing. Mackay and Metz (2007). Labels are direct communication channels to consumers as posited by European Consumer Summit (2010). They help consumers assess and compare products in the market and guide them towards more sustainable healthy and responsible choices. Part of the information given with products and services about price and quality is mandatory and subject to legal requirements especially where food safety and health are concerned (European Directive, 2011). Mandatory information label requirement is to facilitate the transparency of transactions, as in the consumer right directive and responsible purchasing decisions.

A homemaker is a gender neutral term for a housewife or a husband who is in charge of domestic activities in the family, but in the context of this study only female homemakers were used. Due to technological advancement, better products are being produced. People now purchase goods instead of using their local ones. This development makes it necessary to direct homemakers on where to obtain genuine information that will help them make wise selection of goods and services when purchasing.

In Nigeria, low socio-economic status of a substantial part of the population, coupled with illiteracy and ignorance, affect homemakers' ability to read information before making decision to purchase. Some products produced in the rural areas may not even carry any information at

all because they may not have gone through necessary inspection for safety requirements compliance by regulatory agencies such as NAFDAC and SON.

According to decree number 15 of 1993, National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control is authorized to regulate and control the importation, exportation, manufacture, advertisement, distribution, sale and use of drug, food, cosmetics, bottled/sachet water and chemicals. In line with what is obtainable in developed countries, NAFDAC set up certain minimum requirements for both imported and locally manufactured regulated products for the purpose of accurate information, safety and health (CPC, 1999; NAFDAC, 2003; and Nzeka, 2006). The following are some of the requirements among others:

- All the regulated products must register with NAFDAC before they can legally be imported into Nigeria.
- Apart from being registered with NAFDAC, labeling specification must be adhered to.
- Products brand name or common name must appear in bold letters.
- This appears as the company's or product's symbol.
- It is a trade mark connected with particular product.
- Country of origin with detailed address of the manufacturer's location must be precise enough to enable a complainant contact the named agent whenever necessary.
- The production batch number is a batch number on product that makes it possible to identify any group of items that might pose some danger to the consumer.
- Expiry date signifies the length of time the product will stay before it goes bad.
- Best before is recommendation for best quality and flavour.
- A product can be used after best before date but it may have lost some flavour or quality (Asiamah, 2006).
- NAFDAC registration number must be included on the label.
- Beside this, the Nigerian Industrial Standard (NIS) which is a certification mark given by Standard Organization of Nigeria (SON) must be indicated.

Another useful source of consumer information is advertising. The main purpose of advertising is to inform, persuade and remind consumers about particular product and services (Kotler, 2003). According to Mamman, Tsado and Mohammed (2009) advertising is to draw attention of consumers to the existence or superiority of a firm's products and services. It is a paid communication through a non-personal medium in which the sponsor is identified and the message is controlled.

Most advertisers, however, seldom give enough detail information to help consumers. Home-makers should know that the purpose of advertising is not always to favour consumers. Sales agents can also be a source of information to consumers. They can often add the details missed out by advertisement. An agent in this sense is a person who is employed to buy and sell goods on behalf of somebody else.

Another source of information is mass media. Manufacturers tell consumers about their products through publications in the newspapers, magazines and journals. This type of publication states facts about the goods and services in order to get the public interested in them and buy. Such consumer information is limited to the learned home makers who care to read newspapers and magazines. With the biting economy many people have even stopped buying newspapers thereby limiting such information. According to Ugwu, (2003), the use of information source increases with one's level of education.

Other forms of mass media includes brochures, internet, telephone conversation, video conferencing, television and radio (Communication Resource Centre, 2008-2010 and Household Energy Network, 2005). In recent decades, the use of mass media has become a dominant means of transmitting information to large audience. It has been effectively used to promote products, services and ideas (Bulletin of World Health Organization, 2005). It is also observed that the mass media- television, radio, newspapers, magazines, billboards and internet are good at reaching people quickly but less personal. In effect, they may not be as effective as interpersonal communication. Sometimes peer counseling or group workshops/seminars are more effective because they provide an opportunity for classification and feedback.

Oftentimes homemakers use personal experience, friends, neighbors and colleagues as sources of consumer information. As opined by Anyakoha, (2015), such source of information may be low as it is bias-prone.

Other sources of consumer information are as follows:

- Consumer reports. In developed countries, this is one of the best sources of information for consumers. The masses always lodge their reports about goods and services to this body and it serves as a useful guide for consumers when purchasing goods and services.
- Government and non-governmental agencies who are not profit oriented serve as good sources of consumer information. In many countries, including Nigeria governments

establish consumer agencies that set standards for manufactured goods and services (Etonyeaku, 2010). Some of these agencies in Nigeria are stated below.

Standard Organization of Nigeria (SON): This body was formed in 1970 to establish quality assurance system for manufacturers and their goods, which include quality and facilities, laboratories and issuing of standard marks.

Ministry of Trade and Industries which has a department of Weights and Measures. Its function is to stabilize the prices of commodities, control profiteering and inflationary pressures in the economy. This department replaced the former Price Control board.

National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control: (NAFDAC). This was established to protect consumers from adulterated foods, cosmetics and counterfeit drugs. There was an incident in 1989, where over 150 children died as a result of paracetamol syrup containing diethylene glycol. This was one of the issues that led to its formation.

The Trade Description Act of 1968: This safeguards the consumer by imposing criminal liabilities for misleading advertisement and supply of fake goods and services. It works in collaboration with the Consumer Protection Council (CPC, 2004).

Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC): This was established in 2002 to enforce and investigate all financial crimes including advanced fee fraud, money laundering, counterfeiting, illegal money transfer, future market fraud, and fraudulent encashment of negotiable instruments.

International Organization for Standardization (ISO): This is a family of standards for quality management systems. Some of its requirements include a set of procedures that cover all the processes in the business, monitoring processes to ensure effectiveness of standards, checking outputs for defects, facilitating continual improvement and certifies that formalized business processes are followed.

Rent Tribunal: This agency mediates between landlords and tenants and sees that rents are paid when due, that tenants are not marginalized.

All the above agencies are established to enable homemakers feel free and safe to utilize information from genuine sources and achieve maximum value of the goods and services

purchase. It is therefore necessary to assess the influence of homemakers' awareness of sources of information on selection of family goods and services.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to determine the influence of sources of consumer information awareness on homemakers' selection of family goods and services. The specific purpose is to assess the homemakers' level of awareness of sources of consumer information for selecting family goods and services.

Research Question

What are the homemakers' level of awareness of sources of consumer information on selection of family goods and services?

Hypothesis

Ho: There is no significant influence of level of awareness of sources of consumer information on homemakers' selection of goods and services.

Methodology

The study was focused on homemakers' awareness of consumer information for selection of family goods and services in the South- East of Nigeria. South-East is one of the six Geopolitical Zones in Nigeria. South-East is made up of five States which are Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo. The emphasis on women is based on the fact that decisions for purchasing family goods rests more on homemakers in Nigerian culture. Women are responsible for management of home activities as well as purchasing of family goods and services. Anywhere men carry out these responsibilities, they do them on skeletal basis or part-time. The survey research design was adopted for this study. The population was made up of homemakers working in twelve Federal Government Colleges in the five States of South-East. The Federal Government Colleges and the homemakers working in them are located in the States as follows: - Abia State: Federal Government Girls College Umuahia (97 homemakers), Federal Government College Ohafia (78 homemakers) and Federal Government Technical College Ohanso (50 homemakers). Anambra State: Federal Government Girls College Onitsha (156 homemakers), Federal Government College Awka (71 homemakers) and Federal Science

School Nise (65 homemakers). Ebonyi State: Federal Government Girls College Izamgbo (70 homemakers) and Federal Government College Okposi (69 homemakers). Enugu State: Federal Government College Enugu (108 homemakers) and Federal Government Girls College Leija (68 homemakers). Imo State: Federal Government Girls College Owerri (121 homemakers) and Federal Government College Okigwe (78 homemakers). The homemakers used in the study are both teaching and non-teaching staff. Homemakers working in Federal Government Colleges were used because their employment is based on Federal Character Commission. Therefore, they are from different parts of Nigeria and are directly responsible for decision making in purchasing family goods and services. The population was obtained by addition of all the homemakers in the twelve federal government colleges which gave the total of 1031. The sample size was the whole population of 1031 homemakers since it is a survey research. Saltkind (1997) also recommended increase of sample size in survey research to account for the lost questionnaire and those that will not be correctly filled. Therefore, the whole population of homemakers drawn from the twelve federal secondary schools in the five states was used as sample for this study.

A structured questionnaire developed by the researcher was used to collect data from the respondents. A four- point scale was used to measure homemakers' levels of awareness of consumer information as follows: High Awareness = 4, Moderate Awareness = 3, Low Awareness = 2, No Awareness = 1. The instrument was validated by three experts in the field of Home Economics Education and two other experts in Measurements and Evaluation in Faculty of Education, Ahmadu Bello University Zaria. The reliability of the instrument was ascertained using Cronbach's alpha coefficient through pilot study. A total of 30 copies of questionnaire was distributed to homemakers in Federal Government Girls' College Asaba, Delta State, which has similar characteristics with the study area. Cronbach's alpha method was used to analyze the data collected and the result was 0.758. This reliability result was considered adequate for the instrument according to Spiegel (1992) and Stevens (1996).

Five research assistants were selected and instructed on how to fill the questionnaire who helped the researcher to administer and collect the questionnaire. One research assistant was selected from each of the five States. One thousand and thirty-one (1031) copies of the questionnaire were distributed. The number of copies duly filled and collected were eight hundred and ninety-six (896) copies, which represented 86.9% returned. This was used for the

analysis.

Four point scales were assigned as follows: High Awareness = 4, Moderate Awareness = 3, Low Awareness = 2, No Awareness = 1. Mean and Standard deviation were used to compute data generated from the research question. Any item with 2.5 and above was accepted as aware. The null hypothesis was analyzed using simple linear regression statistical analysis and tested at 0.05 significant levels.

Result

Research Question 1: What are the homemakers' level of awareness of sources of consumer information for selecting family goods and services?

Questionnaire items 1-19 of section D answered research question 1.

Table 1 Means and Standard Deviations on levels of awareness of sources of consumer information available for homemakers' selection of goods and services

	Item	N	Mean	SD	Remark
1	Product labels	896	3.59	0.69	Aware
2	Instruction booklets/leaflets	896	3.36	0.63	Aware
3	Standard Organization of Nigeria (SON)	896	3.13	1.00	Aware
4	Telephone Conversation	896	2.97	0.97	Aware
5	Advertisement	896	2.94	0.94	Aware
6	Non-governmental Organization	896	2.94	1.00	Aware
7	Internet for consumer	896	2.73	1.01	Aware
8	Ministry of Trade and Industries	896	2.62	1.05	Aware
9	Television and Radio Programmes on Consumer Affairs	896	2.59	1.07	Aware
10	Rent Tribunal	896	2.35	0.99	Not Aware
11	Public Complaint Commission	896	2.31	0.95	Not Aware

	Item	N	Mean	SD	Remark
12	Consumer reports magazines for consumers' knowledge	896	2.21	0.97	Not Aware
13	Consumer Protection Council (CPC)	896	2.18	0.91	Not Aware
14	Department of Weights and Measures	896	2.16	0.91	Not Aware
15	Journals and newspapers publications for consumer information	896	2.11	0.97	Not Aware

16	Magazines for monthly price list	896	2.10	0.88	Not Aware
17	Sales agents	896	2.08	0.96	Not Aware
18	Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC)	896	1.97	0.96	Not Aware
19	National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC)	896	1.93	0.86	Not Aware
Overall mean			2.54	0.93	Aware

The decision on Table 1 on the levels of awareness of sources of consumer information on homemakers' selection of goods and services revealed an overall mean of 2.51 signifying that the levels of awareness of sources of consumer information influence homemakers' selection of goods and services. That is, the overall mean of 2.54 is above the decision mean of 2.50. The sources that made significant contributions on the levels of awareness of sources of consumer information on homemakers' selection of goods and services with a mean of 2.50 and above are from item 1-9, while those that contributed less, with a mean less than 2.50 are from 10-19. The results of the finding signify that the levels of awareness of sources of consumer information can influence homemakers' selection of goods and services.

Table 2 Regression analysis showing levels of awareness of sources of consumer information available for homemakers' selection of goods and services

Variables	Coefficients	SE	T	Sig.
Constant	364.691	74.211	4.914	.000
Product labels	2.449	13.202	.186	.853
Instruction booklets/leaflets	38.667	15.388	2.513	.012
Standard Organization of Nigeria (SON)	1.616	10.023	.161	.872
Telephone Conversation	7.457	10.726	.695	.487
Advertisement	9.166	10.161	.902	.367
Non-governmental Organization	9.629	10.343	.931	.352
Internet for consumer	15.990	11.268	1.419	.156
Ministry of Trade and Industries	-.557	10.010	-.056	.956
Television and Radio Programmes on Consumer Affairs	-61.465	9.702	-6.336	.000
Rent Tribunal	34.597	10.673	3.241	.001
Public Complaint Commission	20.272	11.314	1.792	.074
Consumer reports magazines for consumers' knowledge	19.244	11.332	1.698	.090
Consumer Protection Council (CPC)	-27.871	10.726	-2.598	.010
Department of Weights and Measures	10.282	8.623	1.192	.233
Journals and newspapers publications for consumer information	-13.199	9.205	-1.434	.152
Magazines for monthly price list	-44.391	9.716	-4.569	.000
Sales agents	-49.066	9.406	-5.217	.000
Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC)	19.746	9.216	2.142	.032

National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC)	30.511	10.400	2.934	.003
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$R^2 = .140$, Adjusted $R^2 = .121$

Regression analysis in Table 2 shows that the R^2 of 14.0 percent and the adjusted R^2 of 12.1 percent explains the total levels of awareness of sources of consumer information (independent variable) on the homemakers' selection of goods and services (dependent variable). Of the total number of the variables studied, the coefficients shows the percentage contribution of each independent variable, which revealed that, Product labels (2.449, $p = .853$), NAFDAC (30.511, $p = .003$), Instruction booklets/leaflets (38.667, $p = .012$), Telephone Conversation (7.457, $p = .487$), Rent Tribunal (34.597, $p = .001$), Advertisement (9.166, $p = .367$), SON (1.616, $p = .872$), Internet for consumer (15.990, $p = .156$), Non-governmental Organization (9.629, $p = .352$), Consumer reports magazines for consumers' knowledge (19.244, $p = .090$), Public Complaint Commission (20.272, $p = .074$), Department of Weights and Measures (10.282, $p = .233$, and EFCC (19.746, $p = .032$) had positive influence on homemakers' selection of goods and services. That is, an increase of one level of awareness of sources of consumer information will increase homemakers' selection of goods and services. However, Sales agents (-49.066, $p = .000$), Magazines for monthly price list (-44.391, $p = .000$, CPC (-27.871, $p = .010$), Ministry of Trade and Industries (-.557, $p = .956$), Television and Radio Programmes on Consumer Affairs (-61.465, $p = .000$), Journals and newspapers publications for consumer information (-13.199, $p = .152$), had negative influence on homemakers' selection of goods and services. This implies that as the above levels of awareness of sources of consumer information with negative values increases, homemakers' selection of goods and services decreases. The overall finding of this study is that levels of awareness of sources of consumer information significantly influenced the homemakers' selection of goods and services. The null hypothesis which stated that levels of awareness of sources of consumer information do not significantly influence homemakers' selection of goods and services was rejected.

Discussion

The result of research question one (1) on the levels of awareness of sources of consumer information revealed an overall mean score of 2.54 signifying that the levels of awareness of

sources of consumer information influenced homemakers' selection of goods and services. The evidence was that, the overall mean response of all the items under levels of awareness of sources of consumer information was 2.54 with standard deviation of 0.93. The result of hypothesis three (3) revealed that levels of awareness of sources of consumer information significantly contributed to homemakers' selection of goods and services. The sources that made significant contributions on the levels of awareness of sources of consumer information on homemakers' selection of goods and services with mean score of 2.50 and above are from item 1-9, while those that contributed less, with means less than 2.50 are from 10-19. Regression analysis in Table 2 shows that the R^2 of 14.0 percent and the adjusted R^2 of 12.1 percent explains the total levels of awareness of sources of consumer information (independent variable) on the homemakers' selection of goods and services (dependent variable). Of the total number of the variables studied, the coefficients shows the percentage contribution of each independent variable, which revealed that, Product labels (2.449, $p = .853$), NAFDAC (30.511, $p = .003$), Instruction booklets/leaflets (38.667, $p = .012$), Telephone Conversation (7.457, $p = .487$), Rent Tribunal (34.597, $p = .001$), Advertisement (9.166, $p = .367$), SON (1.616, $p = .872$), Internet for consumer (15.990, $p = .156$), Non-governmental Organization (9.629, $p = .352$), Consumer reports magazines for consumers' knowledge (19.244, $p = .090$), Public Complaint Commission (20.272, $p = .074$), Department of Weights and Measures (10.282, $p = .233$, and EFCC (19.746, $p = .032$) had positive influence on homemakers' selection of goods and services. That is, an increase of one level of awareness of sources of consumer information will increase homemakers' selection of goods and services. However, Sales agents (-49.066, $p = .000$), Magazines for monthly price list (-44.391, $p = .000$, CPC (-27.871, $p = .010$), Ministry of Trade and Industries (-.557, $p = .956$), Television and Radio Programmes on Consumer Affairs (-61.465, $p = .000$), Journals and newspapers publications for consumer information (-13.199, $p = .152$), had negative influence on homemakers' selection of goods and services. This implies that as the above levels of awareness of sources of consumer information with negative values increases, homemakers' selection of goods and services decreases. The overall finding of this study is that levels of awareness of sources of consumer information significantly influenced the homemakers' selection of goods and services.

It was observed that nine out of the nineteen sources of consumer information items influenced the respondent on selection of goods and services. A possible explanation is that most of them hardly have time to read papers or go to internet as they were not enlightened on available sources. The researcher's personal interaction with some homemakers' revealed that

homemakers' ignored some of these sources of information because they had not offered them any help in times of problems. Homemakers' stated emphatically, that any case reported died naturally without them taking action. They cited Public Complaint Commission (PCC) as one of those sources of information that had never taken action on the cases reported. This creates lack of trust to Nigerian consumer agencies. Vesna and Kristina (2012) study on analysis of awareness and trust consumers Had on organic food legislators in Croatia revealed that consumers had full trust on their legislators. This was because the legislators do what they say. Our Nigerian consumer agencies should learn from some of these foreign agencies on how to encourage homemakers' to recognize them.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it was concluded that awareness of sources of consumer information has significant influence on homemakers' selection of goods and services. Availability of sources of consumer information and education of homemakers to create awareness are all imperative for utilization of the sources.

Recommendations

- i. Effort should be intensified by the State Government to enable homemakers know the available sources of consumer information through radio, television, bill board, posters and hand bills.
- ii. Home economics extension workers should mount workshop/seminars to enlighten homemakers on the sources of consumer information and their importance in decision making for family purchases.
- iii. Monitory team set up by the State Government should make sure that the consumer agencies do their jobs.
- iv. Homemakers should be encouraged to insist on getting information from genuine sources.

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