

Homemakers' Awareness of Consumer Information Needed for Selection of Household Goods and Services in South-East, Nigeria

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Abstract

The objective of the study was to determine the homemakers' level of awareness of consumer information for selection of goods and services. The study was carried out in South-East of Nigeria. Homemakers working in twelve Federal Government Colleges in the five states of South-East were the respondents. The population of the study was 1031 homemakers working in the twelve Federal Government Colleges which was also the sample size for the study. The study used descriptive survey design. A questionnaire was used for data collection in this study. Data was analyzed using mean, standard deviation, and simple linear regression at $p < 0.05$ significance level. The results reveal an overall mean of 3.26 signifying that levels of awareness of consumer information had significant influence on homemakers' selection of family goods and services ($R^2 = .092$, Adjusted $R^2 = .074$, $p < 0.05$). It was therefore recommended among others, that consumer education training and retraining should be carried out through seminars and workshops, curriculum planners should include consumer education in all levels of education in Nigeria and National Agency for food and Drugs Administration and Control (NAFDAC) should publish information about new products promptly.

Keywords: Homemakers, Awareness, Consumer Information, Selection, Goods and Services.

Introduction

Consumer information are those vital pieces of information that are provided for consumers, to help them be aware of existing goods and services and enable

them to assess their values, qualities and quantities for maximum satisfaction. Consumer information includes rights and responsibilities of consumers in the market place. All

efforts to transmit knowledge to consumers for individual use, as undertaken by government agencies, consumer associations, manufacturers, private intermediaries and consumers themselves are referred to as consumer information (European Commission Staff Working Committee, 2012). According to Fair and Accurate Credit Transactions Act (2010), consumer information is any record whether in paper, electronics or other form that is derived from consumer report.

Nwabah, (2009) explained consumer awareness as the abilities and skills needed by individuals, families and corporate bodies to become competent consumers in the world that is constantly changing. She further stated that consumer awareness involves asking questions and making decisions that exposes ways of minimizing wastes and maximizing opportunities for purchasing and utilizing goods and services. According to Longman English Dictionary, consumer awareness is a term used to describe the awareness of a potential or current buyer about a particular product or company. Consumer awareness can be as simple as a shopper remembering a television commercial advertisement or as specific as a consumer delving into the manufacturing origin of a specific product (Consumer Awareness e how.html).

In line with what is obtainable in other developed countries, National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC) is authorized to set up minimum requirements for both imported and locally manufactured regulated

products for the purpose of accurate information, health and safety of consumers (NAFDAC, 2003). Thus, manufacturers and retailers inform consumers about their products through advertising, packaging, labelling and other accompanying documentations, such as instruction manuals or leaflets before or at the time of purchase as contract.

Olabisi (2003) observed that manufacturers of goods and services advertise their products in different exciting ways which may at times deceive the consumers. In support of the above, Nwabah (2009) indicated that knowledge enables consumers to eliminate waste in consumption, safeguard consumers from dangerous and inferior goods and services and other unfair selling practices of business people. Consumer awareness also involves knowing how traders react to consumers in the market place. Experience has shown that some traders exhibit one kind of reaction to intimidate the customer. If somebody priced an item and the seller starts talking to him/her angrily indicating that the person priced it too low, it is just a disguise to intimidate that person. An experience consumer will move away from that trader and go to another person. This type of behaviour is very common in the South-East. Somebody that does not know his/her right as a consumer or a visitor will become afraid to price, thereby accepting any price they offer. Homemakers need to be trained and equipped with knowledge of consumer information.

Though few researchers like (Green,1985; Bran,2001and Lachance

and Nadia,2012) perceived consumer knowledge, awareness and education to be different, majority of others used them interchangeably .Competent, skilled and confident consumers capable of forestalling individual and public problems emerge when consumers are adequately advised, informed and educated (Dittmar, 2010). Gwantwa (2012) study on consumer information awareness in Dar Es Salam and Oguche and Sani (2013) study on awareness of consume information in Kogi State confirmed that educated homemakers were more aware of consumer information. This suggests that a knowledgeable or competent consumer can only be made through effective education.

Generally, a homemaker is a gender-neutral term for a housewife or a husband who is responsible for domestic activities in the family, but in the context of this study only female homemakers were used. In the olden days, homemakers as consumers did not require information in selecting goods and services because they were produced within the families. In recent times, due to advancement in technology better products are being produced. People now purchase goods instead of producing articles for their own needs and desires. This development makes it essential to provide homemakers with the information that will help them in selection of goods and services.

Anyakoha (2015) pointed out some reasons why homemakers should be equipped with knowledge of consumer information. It helps the consumers buy goods and services that are worth the

price .With knowledge of consumer information, the consumer will be aware of the product he or she is buying, whether it will be durable, serviceable and easy to care for or too expensive. Nwankwo (2004) also indicated that knowledge of consumer information enables the consumer in selecting how and where to buy the goods and services needed and obtain the best value for her money.

Skilled consumers should be able to use information and advice, know how to access them; as well as know their rights and responsibilities and be able to exercise them (Lachance and Nadia, 2012). Consumer information awareness is proactive and pre-emptive and as such makes consumers to know their rights and responsibilities as well as understand information in a way that enables them to see the wider consequences of their decision making (Grohoji,2004).It enables consumers to make right decisions about food, clothing, financial security, education and healthcare (Asogwa and Igbokwe,2010). According to Tanko (2012), awareness of information influences consumers to raise their voices to modify the policies of business and government that affect the workings of the market place. This means voicing a complaint and seeking remedies when displeased with a product, a service or a business practice. Awareness of consumer information helps consumers exercise their rights when need arises.

Consumer satisfaction should be the point of focus of all manufacturers and sellers of goods and services when performing business activities. On the

contrary, homemakers have long been exploited in their exchange relations with business people. This exploitation has remained unabated due to illiteracy, ignorance and poverty. Government efforts to protect these homemakers as consumers have not yielded the desired result. For instance, in July, 2016, a homemaker bought one blender from Umuahia main market, when she plugged it on electricity to use, the blender did not work. Due to fear of unknown problem and ignorance, she did not return the product to the seller. In affirmation, Mukhtar (2012) reported about somebody that made on-line purchase of lap top and what he received was not what he bargained for. Due to the money and time involve in pursuing his right, he decided to bear the loss. Nigerian consumers are exploited on daily basis and their rights abused, in most cases without the exploited consumers seeking redress.

The Federal Government of Nigeria has created awareness of consumer information for consumers. It is therefore necessary to examine the influence of consumer information awareness on homemakers' selection of family goods and services in Nigeria.

Objective of the study

The major objective of this study was to investigate the influence of homemakers' awareness of consumer information needed for selection of family goods and services. Specifically, the study:

- (1) determined homemakers 'level of awareness of consumer information needed for selection of family goods and services.

Research question

- (1) What are the homemakers' level of awareness of consumer information needed for selection of family goods and services?

Null Hypothesis

H₀₁ There is no significant influence of levels of awareness of consumer information of homemakers on selection of goods and services.

Methodology

Area of the Study: 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.

Design of the study: The survey research design was adopted for this study.

Population for the 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 Lega (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.

Sample for the Study: 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.

Instrument for Data Collection: 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).

Data Collection Method: 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.

Data Analysis Techniques: 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.

Findings of the Study

Homemakers' Level of Awareness of Consumer Information for Selecting Family Goods and Services

Table 1: Means Responses and Standard Deviations on Levels of Awareness of Consumer Information Needed for homemakers' Selection of Goods and Services

Item	N	Mean	SD	Remark
1 Consumers have right to be informed about the items they purchase	896	3.59	0.73	Aware
2 Fake items purchased should be returned and ask for refund	896	3.23	0.94	Aware
3 Consumer has right for safe environments	896	3.40	0.88	Aware
4 Consumer should protest against deceitful packaging	896	3.23	0.92	Aware
5 Consumer should redress against deceitful product	896	3.13	0.94	Aware
6 Consumer should be compensated for insult received from trader	896	3.01	1.02	Aware
7 Consumer has right to basic needs of life e.g. House, water, food, road etc.	896	3.38	0.90	Aware
8 Consumer has right to choose	896	3.45	0.79	Aware
9 Consumer should have indication on product use	896	3.24	0.88	Aware
10 NAFDAC number is approval of quality product	896	3.20	0.96	Aware
11 Brand name should be boldly written on product	896	3.48	0.79	Aware
12 Ordered goods should be received as stated in agreement	896	3.44	0.81	Aware
13 Instruction booklet or leaflet	896	3.30	0.91	Aware
14 Consumers should report any fake product brought to market for sale	896	3.25	0.98	Aware
15 A product can still be used after the date "Best Before" but it has lost some quality	896	3.11	1.06	Aware
16 Canned food products with dents should not be purchased	896	3.06	1.04	Aware
17 NIS (Nigerian Industrial Standard) is approval of quality given by SON	896	2.94	0.94	Aware
Overall mean		3.26	0.91	Aware

Table 1 shows the mean responses of homemakers on their levels of awareness of consumer information for selection of goods and services for their families. The table reveals an overall mean of 3.26. This shows that all the items on the levels of awareness of consumer information can influence homemakers' selection of goods and services. That is, the overall mean of 3.26 is above the decision mean of 2.50.

Therefore, the results of the finding signify that the levels of awareness of consumer information available can influence homemakers' selection of goods and services.

Null Hypothesis 1

There is no significant influence of levels of awareness of consumer information on homemakers' selection of family goods and services.

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

Consumer Information Needed	Coefficients	SE	t	Sig.
Constant	285.003	64.794	4.399	.000
Consumers have right to be informed about the items they purchase	11.278	15.353	.735	.463
Fake items purchased should be returned and ask for refund	-2.909	13.313	-.219	.827
Consumer has right for safe environments	-22.081	12.486	-1.768	.077
Consumer should protest against deceitful packaging	-29.754	15.535	-1.915	.056
Consumer should redress against deceitful product	53.121	14.430	3.681	.000
Consumer should be compensated for insult received from trader	-2.721	11.634	-.234	.815
Consumer has right to basic needs of life e.g. House, water, food, road e.t.c.	-29.311	13.861	-2.11	.035
Consumer has right to choose	7.832	14.240	.550	.582
Consumer should have indication on product use	9.510	12.740	.747	.456
NAFDAC number is approval of quality product	27.139	10.692	2.538	.011
Brand name should be boldly written on product	-15.442	13.615	-1.134	.257
Ordered goods should be received as stated in agreement	-1.217	13.320	-.091	.927
Instruction booklet or leaflet	-19.284	12.247	-1.575	.116
Consumers should report any fake product brought to market for sale	-.595	12.113	-.049	.961
A product can still be used after the date "Best Before" but it has lost some quality	64.505	10.845	5.948	.000
Canned food products with dents should not be purchased	.997	10.667	.094	.926
NIS (Nigerian Industrial Standard) is approval of quality given by SON	6.748	10.948	.616	.538

R² = .092, Adjusted R² = .074

Table 2 shows Regression analysis. The table shows that the R^2 of 9.2 percent and the adjusted R^2 of 7.4 percent explains the total levels of awareness of consumer information available (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, Consumers have right to be informed about the items they purchase (11.278, $p = .463$), Consumer should redress against deceitful product (53.121, $p = .000$), Consumer has right to choose (7.832, $p = .582$), Consumer should have indication on product use (9.510, $p = .456$), NAFDAC number is approval of quality product (27.139, $p = .011$), A product can still be used after the date "Best Before" but it has lost some quality (64.505, $p = .000$), Canned food products with dents should not be purchased (0.997, $p = .926$), and NIS (Nigerian Industrial Standard) is approval of quality given by SON (6.748, $p = .538$) had positive influence on homemakers' selection of goods and services. That is, an increase in one level of awareness of consumer information available will increase homemakers' selection of goods and services. However, Fake items purchased should be returned and ask for refund (-2.909, $p = .827$), Consumer has right for safe environments (-22.081, $p = .077$), Consumer should protest against deceitful packaging (-29.754, $p = .056$), Consumer should be compensated for insult received from trader (-2.721, $p = .815$), Consumer has right to basic needs

of life e.g. House, water, food, road e.t.c. (-29.311, $p = .035$), Brand name should be boldly written on product (-15.442, $p = .257$), Ordered goods should be received as stated in agreement (-1.217, $p = .927$), Instruction booklet or leaflet (-19.284, $p = .116$, and Consumers should report any fake product brought to market for sale (-.595, $p = .961$) has negative influence on homemakers' selection of goods and services. This implies that as the above sources with negative values increases, homemakers' selection of goods and services decreases. The overall finding of this study is that Levels of awareness of consumer information available significantly influence homemakers' selection of goods and services. Therefore, the null hypothesis which stated that levels of awareness of consumer information available do not significantly influence homemakers' selection of goods and services was rejected.

Discussion

The findings of the research question (Table 1) on homemakers' levels of awareness of consumer information revealed a total mean score of 3.26 signifying that most of the levels of awareness of consumer information can influence homemakers' selection of goods and services. The overall mean score of the variables was 3.26 which is above decision mean score of 2.50. All the levels of homemakers' awareness have made significant contributions on the items of consumer information available for selection of goods and services with the mean scores of 2.50 and above. Regression analysis in Table

2 shows that the R^2 of 9.2 percent and the adjusted R^2 of 7.4 percent explains the total levels of awareness of consumer information available (independent variable) on the homemakers' selection of goods and services (dependent variable). Of the total number of the variables studied, the coefficients showed the percentage contribution of each independent variable, which revealed that, Consumers have right to be informed about the items they purchase (11.278, $p = .463$), Consumer should redress against deceitful product (53.121, $p = .000$), Consumer has right to choose (7.832, $p = .582$), Consumer should have indication on product use (9.510, $p = .456$), NAFDAC number is approval of quality product (27.139, $p = .011$), A product can still be used after the date "Best Before" but it has lost some quality (64.505, $p = .000$, Canned food products with dents should not be purchased (0.997, $p = .926$), and NIS (Nigerian Industrial Standard) is approval of quality given by SON (6.748, $p = .538$) had positive influence on homemakers' selection of goods and services. That is, an increase in one level of awareness of consumer information available will increase homemakers' selection of goods and services. However, Fake items purchased should be returned and ask for refund (-2.909, $p = .827$, Consumer has right for safe environments (-22.081, $p = .077$), Consumer should protest against deceitful packaging (-29.754, $p = .056$), Consumer should be compensated for insult received from trader (-2.721, $p = .815$), Consumer has right to basic needs of life e.g. House, water, food, road e.t.c.

(-29.311, $p = .035$), Brand name should be boldly written on product (-15.442, $p = .257$), Ordered goods should be received as stated in agreement (-1.217, $p = .927$), Instruction booklet or leaflet (-19.284, $p = .116$, and Consumers should report any fake product brought to market for sale (-.595, $p = .961$) has negative influence on homemakers' selection of goods and services. This implies that as the above sources with negative values increases, their influence on homemakers' selection of goods and services decreases. The overall finding of this study is that Levels of awareness of consumer information significantly influence homemakers' selection of goods and services.

It is not surprising that the homemakers' recorded more level of awareness of consumer information. The respondents of this study are those working in secondary schools who are educated at various levels. This agreed with Oguiche and Sanni (2013) study on awareness and utilization of consumer information in Kogi state. They observed that educated homemakers' were more aware of consumer information. Gwantwa (2012) study on awareness of food labelling information in Dar Es Salam, confirmed that awareness of consumer information increased as level of education increased. Asogwa and Ibokwe (2010) perceived consumer information awareness of consumers as life skill necessary for general health and well-being in all areas of their lives. Tanko (2012) pointed out that awareness of consumer information influences consumers to raise their voices to

modify policies of business that affect the workings of the market place. Nwankwo(2004) stated that knowledge of consumer information enables the consumer in selecting how and where to buy the goods and services needed and obtain the best value for her money. In summary of this result, awareness of consumer information does not occur by chance, it is through training and retraining of the consumers as emphasized by European Commission Staff Working Committee (2012).

Conclusion

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

Recommendations

- ❖ Consumer education training and retraining should be carried out through seminars and workshops by home economics teachers to enlighten homemakers. This can be done through seminars, workshops and women meetings.
- ❖ curriculum planners should include consumer education in all levels of education in Nigeria, let it be a compulsory subject at junior classes.
- ❖ National Agency for food and Drugs Administration and Control (NAFDAC) should publish information about new products promptly to enable consumers be informed.

- ❖ Home Economics extension workers should enlighten homemakers on how to exercise their rights as consumers in the market place.

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