

EFFECTIVENESS OF CONSUMER PROTECTION AGENCY ON CONSUMPTION OF STAPLE FOODS BY RURAL DWELLERS IN IMO STATE, NIGERIA.

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ABSTRACT

The study examined the effectiveness of consumer protection agency on consumption of foods by rural dwellers in Imo State, Nigeria. Multistage random sampling procedure was used to select 120 respondents. Data were collected using interview schedule and analyzed using descriptive statistics. Results revealed that majority (62.5%) of the respondents attested that consumer protection agency was ineffective in giving information and educating consumers, while majority (79.2%) of the respondents confirmed that consumer protection agency was effective on visitation and inspection of markets regularly. While consumer protection agency was effective in monitoring environment suitability with the mean score of (2.4) and checking substandard and regulation of price (2.2). Consumer Protection Agency was generally low and relevant in the consumption of staple foods by rural dwellers except in control of dumping foods (\bar{X} = 2.1). Although consumers were satisfied with Consumer Protection Services, especially in securing and destroying of expired foods (\bar{X} 3.2) and gain derived (3.2) and treating and punishing offenders (3.1). Result also showed that educational level and socio-economic factors had the highest mean scores of (2.7), followed by substitute products (2.6) and culture family/group composition (2.5) as factors that influence consumption of rural dwellers. The study therefore recommends that consumer protection offices should be established and operated in all the local government area headquarters to bring the service closer to the rural people/dwellers.

Keywords: Effectiveness, Consumer Protection, Rural- Dwellers

INTRODUCTION

Development involves acquisition of better quality food, better health, prevention of dumping of goods and services that ensures consumers satisfaction, rights and protection (Ebomuche and Njoku, 2005). The state of consumer satisfaction is directly related to the effectiveness of consumer protection source. The hopeless and helpless consumers incapacitated by the poor state of consumer protection agencies necessitated by nefarious, dubious, fraudulent and dishonest producers sale of staple foods / consumer goods (Sach, 2005). It is a robust combination of human and material resources to achieve economic, social, and scientific and technology changes for the immediate and future needs of the citizenry (Okorie, 2000).

The effect of development is to bring about appreciable economic and social transformations which will reflect on the lives and health of citizens (Okorie, 2000). The law of demand and supply of goods and services aims at maximum profit while consumers aims at

maximum utilization/satisfaction derived from the consumption of each product consumed.

Regulatory participation involves government making laws that control activities of marketing associations. Some of the agencies that protect consumer of goods and services in Nigeria include National Agency for Food and Drugs Administration and Control (NAFDAC), Standard Organization of Nigeria (SON), and Consumer Protection Council (CPC). Their aims are to regulate the quality and standard of foods and drugs produced. Consumer protection should be seen as a blessing and a way of stimulating the economy and as well as promoting healthy living this is not accepted referring material or points. Consumerism is a combined activity of the government, non-governmental organizations and concerned citizens that protect and help consumers in their exchange relationship in the market place. Consumer goods / staple foods are essential commodities such as food used in a short time while staple foods are foods

regularly consumed. The sole aim of every consumer is to derive utility while the satisfaction which a consumer derives from the consumption of goods at any given time (Okeke, 1984).

Today, there is basic misconception that producers can push any product from the production to the consumption point to market and nothing more (Wikipedia, 2018). Undeveloped and developed nations are facing serious challenges, hostilities and condemnations. The freedom in entry and exit by marketers worsen the situation. Today, marketing malpractices are on increase negating the law of marketing which states that every producer should produce goods, qualitative well packaged, labeled and guaranteed products and prices determined based on what the market can bear. The products should be promoted and information properly disseminated thereby creating a healthy relationship between the producers and the consumers (Emerenini, 2009).

Regrettably, the presence of adulterated, deteriorated, fake, and low quality products flood our markets today. Relabeling of expired foods, excessive prices on certain staple foods/ scarcity of essential foods when and where most needed, false advertising are testimonies that protection have failed in its role and function. Recent media reports and personal observation indicated cases of marketing malpractices such as fake, deteriorated, substandard products, excessive prices, relabeling of expired drugs and food with its attendant dangers to human health or life. Regrettably, producers or distributors and sellers of staple foods involved in the production and sale are becoming more unethical in their activities. These unethical behaviors are manifested by the presence of fake, spoiled and adulterated products/staple foods like rice, fish, beverage, vegetable oil and meat; relabeled expired foods, unsafe products found here and there with us.

Oxford Learners Dictionary 6th Edition year defines consumption as the act of using foods. Consumption can be influenced by a lot of factors among them are socio-cultural and psychological factors. The psychological factors such as motive, attitude, personality, learning, perception and self-control. The socio-cultural factors are divided into social force and the cultural forces. The social forces are the social class, reference group and family while the cultural forces are culture and subculture. The history of consumer protection started in 1900s when the emphasis was on business protection against unfair practices, product purity and product shortages. The movement gathered momentum in 1930s to 1950s to address the issues of misrepresentation, labeling, performance, standard and consumer refunds. The third era lasted from 1960s to 1980s to popularize the social movement. This marked the period of President John F.

Kennedy's announcement of a consumer Bill of Rights. These consumers' rights were the right to safety, right to be informed, right to choose and right to be heard and right to a physical environment that protects the quality of life.

In Nigeria, Consumer Protection Council (CPC), National Agency for Food and Drugs Administration and Control (NAFDAC) and Standard Organization of Nigeria (SON). The fourth stage of consumer protection social movement consumerism started in 1980s to date. The functions of consumer protection are many. They are receiving of complaints and petition, fixing of rates, report suspicious products, giving information to consumer, ensure discipline to producers, sales promotion, approves sale promotion, products and services. Other aims of consumer protection include protecting and enhancing consumer interest, enforcement of appropriate standard for products, promote fair and ethical trade practices, control dumping of goods and monitoring of quality control.

Nigerian government has been directly involved in consumer protection crusade over the years though its agencies / consumerism movement those efforts have been unable to provide a sustainable consumer protection delivery system that is accessible and functional to the rural households/dwellers. It is against this background that the research seeks to address these specific objectives; to examine the effectiveness of consumer protection agency on consumption of staple foods by rural dwellers, determining the relevance of consumer protection on consumption of rural dwellers, and determine the factors that influence consumption staple foods. Please the introduction seems to be too long and might need to be reduced and still have vital information

METHODOLOGY

This study was carried out in Imo state Nigeria, and it consisted of 27 Local Government Areas. The state is made up of three commercial centers namely Owerri, Orlu and Okigwe centres. The study adopted multi-stage random sampling technique in selecting the sample for the study. Three rural LGAs were purposively selected based on heavy presence of commercial activities and markets in the LGAs. The selected LGAs includes Aboh-Mbaise LGA from Owerri commercial centre, Isiala-Mbano LGA and Ideato North LGA from Okigwe and Orlu centres respectively. Next stage involved a purposive selection of two big markets also based on the presence of large markets located in the area. These markets were Afor-Enyigugwu and Uvuru in Aboh-Mbaise LGA, Oriemaraku and Nkwo Umuezeala in Isiala-Mbano and Oru Arondizogu and Eke Dikenafi, giving a total of six markets. Twenty rural households were randomly

selected from each of the six markets. Thus, a total of 120 rural dwellers consumers formed the sample size for the study.

Data for this study were obtained using an interview schedule with what??? supported with some personal observations noted and recorded. Data obtained were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequency count, preference; ordinary ranking and meanscores were used to analyze the objectives. A 3-point Likert type of scale was used to determine the mean. The mean value of 2.5 was taken as bases for judgment. Any response with 2.5 and above was regarded as relevance while any mean below/less than 2.5 mean score is regarded as irrelevant. The mean Likert level was determined thus;

$$X_n = \frac{\sum f_x}{N}$$

Where X_n = mean score

Σ = summation

F = frequency

n = Likert nominal value

N = Number of respondents.

Therefore

$$X = 1 + 2 + 3 + 4 = 10/4 = 2.50.$$

Objective iii and iv were analyzed using frequency distribution, percentage and mean. Using 4-point and 3-point Likert type scales, were used to determine these means respectively.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Effectiveness of Consumer Protection Agency.

Respondents by effectiveness of consumer protection services on table 1 shows that majority (62.5%) of rural

dwellers attested that consumers, protection was ineffective in giving of information and education to consumers while most (79.2%) confirmed that consumer protection was effective in visitation to market regularly, the result further reveals that consumer protection was ineffective in quality control and grade food (60.0%), destroy fake, substandard and expired foods (52.5%). The result also reveals that 56.5% indicated that consumer protection was effective in standardization and price checking regularly where monitoring (54.2%) by consumer protection in environmental sustainability was effective. The result further showed that five out of the seven items statements has means less than 2.00 benchmark. This implies that consumer protection agency was ineffective in market inspection (1.3), giving information and education (1.5), destroying of fake and substandard foods (1.5), checking of quality control and grading of foods (1.6) and receiving petition and punishing of offenders (1.9) while consumer protection was effective in monitoring of environmental suitability (2.4) and price regulation (2.2). This finding on effectiveness of consumer protection agency services agreed with those of Anyanwu (1999), Njoku and Ibe (2017) that most consumers confirmed that consumer protection was ineffective in consumer protection service. The findings are in consonance with that consumer protection agency was ineffective in service delivering in rural dweller because it passed only two out of seven indicators or item statements based in evaluating the effectiveness of consumer protection service in the study area.

Table 1: Distribution of Consumers based on Effectiveness of Consumer Protection Agency in Service Delivery

Effectiveness of Consumer Protection	Very effective (3)	Effective (2)	Not-effective (1)	Mean (\bar{X})
Giving information and education	75 (12.5)	30 (10.8)	75 (12.5)	1.5
Consumer protection officers visit market to inspect regularly	12 (10.0)	13 (10.8)	95 (79.2)	1.3
Receive petitions and punish offenders	42 (35.0)	28 (23.3)	50 (41.7)	1.9
Check substandard foods and regulate prices	68 (56.7)	12 (10.0)	40 (33.3)	2.2
Monitor environment suitability	65 (54.2)	35 (29.2)	20 (16.7)	2.4
Destroy fake and expired substandard foods	12 (10.0)	45 (37.5)	63 (52.5)	1.5
Quality control and grade foods	15 (12.5)	33 (27.5)	72 (60.0)	1.6
Grand mean				1.7

Source: Field Survey, 2017.

The agreed with of Okorie, (2000) and those of Nwosu (2000) consumer protection service was effective in economic development and well-being of consumers in Nigeria.

The distribution of rural dwellers by the perceived relevance of consumer protection on consumption of staple foods is resented in Table 2. The table shows that all variables investigate had low degree of relevance of consumer protection service on consumption in the study area.

Data in table XYZ showed that all the variables had mean scores below 2.5, the discriminating index or benchmark. This implies that they were perceived by

the rural dwellers as construe irrelevant and this could be because they the contributions itemized did not bothered on the staple foods sold and consumed by households in the study area. The irrelevant contributions with highest mean score was control dumping of staple foods ($\bar{X} = 2.1$), followed by protection consumers interest ($\bar{X} = 1.9$), receiving petition from consumers ($\bar{X} = 1.85$), and enforcement of standards ($\bar{X} = 1$) and reporting suspicious products (1.78) among others.

Table 2: Relevance of Consumer Protection on Consumption of Staple Foods by Rural Dwellers

R e l e v a n c e	Strongly relevant	R e l e v a n t	Strongly irrelevant	I r r e l e v a n t	Mean(\bar{X})
Receive petition from consumers	1	0 1	5 4	3 5	2 1 . 2 5
Effective in fixing price	6	1	7 4	0 5	7 1 . 7 7
Report suspicious products	2	0 1	0 9	8	6 1 . 7 8
Promoting healthy living	1	8 1	2 8	8	7 1 . 7 6
Control dumping of foods	1	2 1	8 6	5 2	5 2 . 1
Give information to consumers	0	1	7 4	3 6	0 1 . 6 4
Discipline producers	7	1	2 4	6 6	0 1 . 3 9
Ensure consumers rights	0	2	3 4	0 5	7 1 . 7 8
Protect consumers interest	1	2 2	3 2	5 7	0 1 . 9 7
Enforce standard	0	3	9 1	3 6	8 1 . 7 6
G r a n d m e a n					1 . 8

Bench mark=2.5

Source: Field Survey, 2017

Table 3 revealed the perceived satisfaction of rural dwellers on consumer protection agencies service on consumptions of staple foods. The effect/activities /services are all satisfactory in contributing to consumer protection rights all the test statistics mean (\bar{X}) were above 2.5 ($\bar{X} > 2.5$) indicating that consumer protection agencies are working hard in their jobs.

Result further showed that consumers had highest satisfaction in the way consumer protection seizes and destroys expired foods ($\bar{X} = 3.3$), followed by gains derived from consumer protection ($\bar{X} = 3.2$), punishing of offenders ($\bar{X} = 3.1$), while they were not

satisfied with the method of carrying out consumer protection services ($\bar{X} = 2.2$) and comprising and abating corruption ($\bar{X} = 2.4$).

This implies that consumers were partly satisfied with the services of consumer protection agency services in Imo state, and similarly, not satisfied with their services. This is in line with the findings of Inyanga (1998) and Nwaru and Nwaru (2014) who showed that consumers were satisfied with consumer protection agencies services especially checking of fuel pump price.

Table 3: Distribution of Respondents by perceived satisfaction of Consumer Protection Agency Services

Satisfaction of Consumer Protection Services	Strongly Satisfied (4)	Satisfied (3)	Strongly Dissatisfied (2)	Dissatisfied (1)	Mean (\bar{X})	Study
Method of carrying out consumer protection services	12 (10.0)	18 (15.0)	70 (58.3)	20 (16.7)	2.2	0.0183
By compressing and corruption sharp and practices	15 (12.5)	32 (26.7)	55 (45.8)	18 (15.0)	2.4	0.0200
Gains derived from consumer protection	63 (52.5)	31 (25.8)	16 (13.3)	10 (8.3)	3.2	0.0267
By treating/punishing offenders	58 (78.3)	31 (25.8)	14 (11.7)	17 (14.2)	3.1	0.0258
Seizing and destroying expired staple foods	68 (56.7)	28 (23.3)	19 (15.8)	5 (4.2)	3.3	0.0275
G r a n d m e a n						2.8

Source: Field Survey, 2017.

Bench mark=2.5

Table 4 shows the factor influencing the consumption of staple foods by the rural dwellers. All the factors listed except one appear to have serious influence on the rural dwellers consumption of staple foods. Result showed that legal and pollutant force had no serious influence on consumption of staple foods.

Nevertheless, with ordinary ranking, educational and socio economic factors, substitute products, culture, family/group factors appear to have relatively more serious influence on the rural dwellers. Result showed that educational and socio economic factor and agriculture substitutive products were the major factors that influence consumption of people. Result shows that the

factors influence consumers consumption are in the following order; perception, Belief and attitude, personality, social and cultural factor, Social class, group influence, culture, family composition and income expectation in future among others. This implies that consumer protection agency needs to work harder to make more impact on the rural dwellers consumption behaviour toward changing their attitude in favour of information that would benefit them and better their standard of living such as standard and quality foods consumption.

Table 4: Factors influencing the consumption of staple foods by Rural Dwellers

F a c t o r s	Very Serious	S e r i o u s	Not Serious	Mean (\bar{X})	ODR Rank
Perception, Belief and attitude	70 (58.7)	30 (25.0)	20 (16.7)	2.4	4 th
P e r s o n a l i t y	68 (56.7)	32 (26.7)	20 (16.7)	2.4	4 th
Social and cultural Force i.e. economic factors	65 (54.2)	35 (29.2)	20 (16.7)	2.7	3 rd
Social class, group influence	75 (54.2)	25 (20.8)	30 (25.0)	2.3	5 th
Culture, family composition	85 (70.8)	15 (12.5)	20 (16.7)	2.5	3 rd
Legal and Political forces/prices	15 (12.5)	20 (16.7)	85 (70.8)	1.4	7 th
Income expectation in future	52 (53.3)	21 (17.5)	47 (39.2)	2.0	5 th
Substitute / complementary products	86 (71.7)	22 (18.3)	12 (10.0)	2.6	2 nd
Educational / Socio-economic factors	90 (75.0)	20 (16.7)	10 (8.3)	2.7	1 st

Source: Field Survey, 2017.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study has shown that effectiveness of consumer protection agency in the area was carried out on consumption of staple foods by rural dwellers. The result showed that consumer protection agency was mainly ineffective in service delivering, irrelevant, satisfactory but consumption of staple foods was influenced by educational and socio economic and availability of substitutes factors given this winding, it would be concluded that consumer protection agency has the potentials for, improving healthy living and standard of living of rural dwellers.

There is need for consumer protection service providers in the area to encourage existing rural dwellers to improve their educational and socio-economic status by providing adult education programmes that rural households could receive educational learning.

Government should establish consumer protection offices in all the local government area headquarters to ensure adequate sensitization of consumer on the need and benefit of consumer protection services in well-being of individuals and society at large.

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