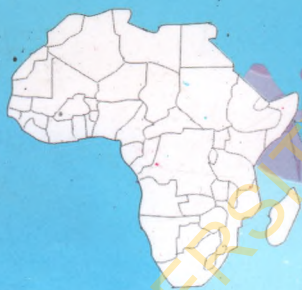


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Information Needs, Seeking Behaviour and Use for Sustainable Development by Market Women in Lagos State, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study investigated the information needs, seeking behaviour and the sources used by market women in Lagos State for development. Random sampling method was used to select 120 market women from a population of 1200 while data was collected using questionnaire and interview methods. The women needed information mostly on finance, health and economic aspects and sought information primarily from informal sources such as friends, and colleagues, in the two markets (40%) covered to improve their wellbeing. Friends, colleagues, radio and television were used daily for sourcing information. Over 87% of the respondents in both markets agreed that language of information source was the major barrier to their use of various sources. The needs of these women could be met through repackaging of information from information centres tailored to suit their needs and improve their life and society.

Keywords: Information needs, information seeking behaviour, market women, Development, Nigeria.

Introduction

Information is an important ingredient for development to occur in any society because it is an essential ingredient for planning and decision-making. Every individual no matter the level of education, sophistication, affluence and location needs and may use information from the environment to satisfy a want in his/her life (Mooko & Aina, 2007). Information is needed for sustainable development as it could be used for public awareness on issues which would make the individual better in their decision making for the present and the future. Sustainable development can be defined as the development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs (Shah, 2005 & International Institute of Sustainable Development, It is the level of development that takes into account the present economic, social and environmental needs of the people.

Information need is a gap in one's life that would have made an individual achieve or meet an objective to improve his or her life. Information needs vary from person to person, and organisation to organisation. The information needs of market women could be on business, politics, religion, health, family issues, etc. Information needs of rural women in Nigeria have been summarised as related to their occupation, health, religion, economy, government activities, education, childbearing and family affairs and social life (Aboyade, 1990; Mooko, 2005; Mooko and Aina, 2007).

Information seeking behaviour can be described as the way an individual acts when searching, receiving or acquiring information. Kalkal, Ikongo-Odongo and Kigongo (2004) conceptualize to information seeking behaviour as the way an individual searches for and uses information. Market women are faced with continuous flow of information arising from various sources such as manufacturers, wholesalers, consumers and retailers and they need to search for information that would be relevant to satisfy their needs.

Individuals may use the following sources to satisfy their information needs: newspaper and magazines, friends and colleagues, radio and television, libraries, etc. Schram (2002) identifies newspapers, books, films, friends and colleagues as sources of information that individuals use to satisfy their information needs. Information is very vital to market women especially in their business activities to facilitate decision making and eventually improve their standard of living. The market women may use information for their business activities in areas such as sales, performance, trends, financial cost, investment return and sourcing for loan facility.

It has been observed from past studies that there is a lack of information centres for market women that would have promoted their access to and use of information for improved development (Mooko, 2005). Libraries do not have adequate materials that would satisfy the information needs of this group of people and it could be due to their level of literacy and language barrier as most of them are not literate. Many of the information materials found in libraries are mostly not in their local language and this has led to their low use of such materials. Wrighter (2003) opines that one cannot have equal access to information when one cannot read or when one does not know what exist.

Studies have also been carried out on the information seeking behaviour of different groups of people: students, patients, doctors, scientists, social scientists, catholic religious group, artisans, professionals and politicians (Ellis, Cox & Hall, 1993; Urquhart & Crane, 1994; Leckie, Pettigrew & Sylvain, 1996; Lin & Redfern, 1997; Njongmeta & Ehikhamenor, 1998; Adetimirin, 2004; Bryant, 2004; Mooko & Aina, 2007). This shows the importance of this concept in order to provide relevant information for their sustainable development.

For sustainable development of market women, information is needed to effectively and successfully carry out their business activities. Not much is known about the information needs and seeking behaviour of market women in Nigeria. Schram (2002) contend that studies on provision of

information to market women in Nigeria are rare, yet the importance of these women cannot be overemphasised. The study therefore, aims to investigate the information needs, seeking behaviour and use for sustainable development by women in Idumota and Oshodi markets in Lagos State, Nigeria.

Objectives of the study

The broad objective of this study is to underscore the importance of information needs of market women in Lagos State, highlight the modalities of seeking required information and how this could be used for their sustainable development.

The specific objectives of this study can be summarised as follows:

- i. ascertain the information needs of the market women;
- ii. identify their information seeking behaviour;
- iii. find out the information sources used by these women for sustainable development;
- iv. examine the frequency of use of their information sources; and
- v. Identify the factors affecting the use of information sources for sustainable development by these market women.

Methodology

A survey design was adopted for this study and the population was made up of 1200 market women from locked up shops in two major markets (Oshodi and Idumota). Purposive sampling method was used to select market women who sold only commodities such as textiles, foodstuff, shoes and bags and kitchen utensils using a sampling fraction of 10% to get a sample size of 120 market women.

The questionnaire was the major data collection instrument, complemented with observations and interviews. The questionnaire was translated into Yoruba language, the local language that the market women spoke fluently. The questionnaire generated data on the

information needs, seeking behaviour and use of the market women. Oral interview was held with the market women leader to investigate how the association provided information to its members, problem(s) of access and use of information. Data collected were analysed with descriptive techniques and results presented in Tables. One hundred and twenty copies of the questionnaire were administered to the market women and all were retrieved and found usable for analysis. This high response rate could be due to the fact that the questions were translated to the local language (Yoruba), asked and filled by the researcher for the respondents.

Results

More than 60% of respondents in both markets were less than 30 years old, married and had secondary school education as their highest qualification (Table 1). The market women were found to need information in areas such as finance, health, social, economic, political and others (Table 2). The women in both markets were found to need information mostly related to financial matters, such as where to get loans or financial assistance to improve their capital base of the various commodities they were selling. The result reveals that political matters were the least needed information for the women in both markets (8.8% in Oshodi and 6.0% in Idumota).

Table 1: Demographic information of the market women

Variable	Markets				
	Oshodi		Idumota		
	N	%	N	%	
Age (Years)	Below 21	14	23.3	9	15.0
	21 – 30	28	46.7	25	41.7
	31 – 45	10	16.7	18	30.0

	Above 45	8	13.3	8	13.3
Educational Qualification	None	1	1.7	6	10.0
	Primary School	21	35.0	25	41.6
	Secondary & Grade II	30	50.0	27	45.0
	Vocational Training	8	13.3	2	3.3
	Marital Status	Single	21	35.0	29
	Married	39	65.0	31	51.7

Table 2 Information Needs of the Market women

Information Needs	Markets			
	Oshodi		Idumota	
	N	%	N	%
Finance	59	30.6	60	27.8
Health	43	22.3	51	23.6
Social	21	10.9	28	13.0
Economic	49	25.4	45	20.8
Political	17	8.8	13	6.0
Others	4	2.1	9	4.2

The sources from which the market women sought information from were; friends and colleagues, newspapers and magazines, radio and television and the market associations they belong to. Majority of the respondents in Oshodi market sought information from radio and television 24 (40.0%) on where to purchase their commodities, while those in Idumota mostly sought theirs from friends and colleagues 24 (40.0%). This is because there are many programmes on the radio which are produced in the local

language and tailored towards meeting the information needs of these women. Their friends and colleagues were reliable sources of information to seek information from than the government officials. The least sources used for seeking information in both markets were market associations 1 (1.7%) and newspapers and magazines 9 (15.0%) (Table 3).

Table 3: Information Seeking Behaviour of the Market Women

Sources of Information	Markets			
	Oshodi		Idumota	
	N	%	N	%
Friends & Colleagues	23	38.3	24	40.0
Newspaper & Magazines	12	20.0	9	15.0
Radio & Television	24	40.0	17	28.3
Association	1	1.7	10	16.7

From Table 4, the result revealed that women in both markets were found using information from their friends and colleagues and radio and television more on a daily basis (48.3 and 40.0% for Oshodi and 63.3% and 38.3% for Idumota). These sources were found to be easily available, accessible and reliable to them without them having to leave their shops which might lead to reduction in sales from their goods. The least sources used i.e. once a week, were newspapers and magazines for Oshodi market women 1 (1.7%) and friends and colleagues for those in Idumota 1 (1.7%).

Table 4. Frequency of Use of Information Sources by the Market women

Sources	Markets															
	Oshodi						Idumota									
	Three times Daily		Three times a week		Twice a week		Twice a week		a week		Once a week					
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%		
Friends & Colleagues	29	48.3	8	13.3	10	16.2	13	21.7	38	63.3	13	21.7	8	13.3	1	1.7
Newspapers & Magazines	24	40.0	24	40.0	11	18.3	1	1.7	23	38.3	22	36.7	9	15.0	6	10.6
Radio/TV	16	26.2	20	33.3	20	33.3	4	6.7	18	30.0	19	31.7			23	38.3
Association Meetings	4	6.2	13	21.7	26	43.3	17	28.3	11	18.3	2	3.3	24	40.0	23	38.3

The respondents identified language as the major problem in their use of information sources in both markets (Table 5). Others included location of information centre is far, inaccessibility to relevant information and lack of information centre in the markets. Many of the information sources are in English and not in their local language which hindered their use of such sources, given that many of the market women were not very literate as reflected in their possession of secondary school certificate as their highest educational qualification. This reduced their use of information sources not written in their local language, even when they need such information and can access it.

Discussion of Findings
Information Needs of the Market Women

The major areas in which the market women needed information were in areas of finance, health and economic. These women required information on the goods they sell, where they could source for financial assistance such as loans from cooperative societies, government and

where they can get goods to purchase at reasonable and affordable prices. The women also needed information on health matters because it is only when they are healthy that they can carry out their economic activities and make good sales which will subsequently improve their living conditions. This finding supports by Mooko and Aina (2007) study on artisans in Botswana, where they reported that their greatest information needs were job-related, such as finding sources for raw materials.

Information Seeking Behaviour of the Market Women

Friends and colleagues, newspapers and magazines, radio and television and the market associations they belong to were the sources from which the market women sought information. These sources are categorised as informal sources and were free to access, convenient and reliable. This finding corroborates that of Mooko and Aina (2007) on information seeking behaviour of artisans in Botswana where they reported that the most sought information sources were from informal sources.

Table 5 Factors Affecting Use of the Information Sources by the Market Women

Factors	Markets							
	Oshodi				Idumota			
	Agree		Disagree		Agree		Disagree	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Inaccessibility to relevant information	46	79.3	12	20.7	38	82.6	8	17.6
Lack of information centre in the market	39	69.6	17	30.4	43	81.1	10	18.9
Lack of knowledge to relevant information	31	58.5	22	41.5	29	58.0	21	42.0
Location of information centre is far	45	80.4	11	19.6	37	80.4	9	19.6
Language of information source	52	91.2	5	8.8	49	87.5	7	12.5
Age affects my access to information	28	66.7	14	33.3	41	75.9	13	24.1

Information Sources used by the Market Women

Informal sources of information (friends and colleagues were the major sources of information used daily by the women in both markets. These sources were used source out information on the places to purchase goods, loans and how they could improve their sales which were important to sustain and develop themselves and their society. This finding supports by Mooko and Aina (2007), Adetimirin (2004) and Njohgmeta and Ehikhamenor (1998) that informal sources such as friends and colleagues are frequently used sources of information by individuals.

Constraints to Use of Information for Sustainable Development by the Market Women

The major constraint to the use of information for development by the market women is language of information source. Others include location of information centre is far, inaccessibility to relevant information and lack of information centre in the markets. These are the major problems because information sources such as newspapers and leaflets, government publications are mostly not written in the language in which the women could read due to their low level of literacy. This finding corroborates Mooko and Aina (2007) that low literacy level of artisans is a major problem in using information sources and Wrighter (2003) that an information source can only be used if the intended user understands the language in which it is written or disseminated.

Recommendations and Conclusions

The market women in Lagos State needed information on finance, health and economic aspects. They sought and used information from informal sources such as friends and colleagues, to develop themselves. However, language of the information source hindered their use of information sources to improve themselves and their society. For improved business performance, it is recommended that information sources should be repackaged in the local language and made easily accessible to them.

The radio and television should carry out more awareness programmes on different information in the local language tailored towards meeting the information needs of the market women.

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