

**LOCATION AND THE RETAILING SKILL NEEDS OF FEMALE FOODSTUFF VENDORS IN AKWA IBOM NORTH WEST SENATORIAL DISTRICT**

**BY**

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**ABSTRACT**

*This study investigated the Location and the Retailing Skill Needs of Female Foodstuff Vendors in Akwa Ibom North West Senatorial District. Two specific purposes and corresponding research questions and hypotheses guided the study. It was concluded that majority of rural female foodstuff vendors need skill in recording names of those who owe and the amount, higher proportion of the urban female foodstuff vendors need the storage skills in storing foodstuff in baskets, cupboards or bags, and skills in storing grain in local silos and that both rural and urban female foodstuff retailers need skills in foodstuff vendors before they rot away. One of the recommendations was that women foodstuff vendors should be properly trained by Ministry of Commerce, Trade and Industry on how to keep proper records of their business transactions in subsidiary books of accounts like day book, cashbook, and purchase day book receipt as it was advised that it should be done through adult education programmes.*

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**INTRODUCTION**

Woman constitute majority of the world population. Therefore, no meaningful development effort can be achieved without the involvement of women in the mainstream of nation development agenda. David (2000) asserted that if women lack the basic skills and training, they would not be empowered for the national economic life. Women are at the heart of development as they control most of the non-monetary economy (subsistence farming, agriculture, child bearing, domestic labour). They also play an important role in the monetary economy (trading, wage labour, employment.). Yawa (2002) asserted that everywhere in the world, women work around the home and outside the home. The woman as a person is an agent of reproduction of life itself. This role places women in the position of life blood of the entire humanity. Pant (2002) state that women are the first teacher, the sustainer and maintainer of the home, the peace makers, the symbol of beauty, major molders of character within the family and mother of the human race.

Most of these attributes and contributions by women were not recognized until 1975-1987 when the united nation declared the decade for women making it mandatory for government to focus on issues of women as integral component of national development. Based on the united nation declaration, majority of women who engage in subsistence trading and agricultural work expect government to provide enabling market environments in terms of transportation, easy access to funds, provision of central storage facilities provision and maintenance of infrastructural facilities like electricity and water. The women also expect Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to provide them manpower development training programmes and orientation for enlightenment.

Chukwura (2002) affirmed that women traders in food stuff sector are the agent who goes between the producers and the customer. They buy foodstuff from the producer and sell directly

to the customers. The bulk of these foodstuffs are produced by farmers in these areas. Women foodstuff vendors are additionally confronted with unfair competition from big wholesalers that now diversify into retailing. For instance, women foodstuff vendors in Urua Mbakara and Urua Otoh in Ekpene urban market complain that the company from which they purchase rice and beans for retailing now sells directly to consumers at cheaper price thus denying them of their target market. Similarly, some retrenched male and female workers and jobless youths are increasingly encroaching on their business stronghold by taking up petty retail trading. These new entrants have an edge over the women because it is easier for them to borrow either from relations or friends to start the business. In Nigeria today, it is a common feature seeing men retailing, vegetables, pepper, onions, garri, and fruit in their wheelbarrows.

Nelson (2002), sequel to his study on women empowerment for community development through Non-formal education (NFE) report that in occupational dimension, 75% of women occupy appreciable position in economic development in the society. It could be inferred that assisting the women to acquire retailing skill can improve their productivity and also enhance the development of their trading and commercial capabilities.

The store location is the major element of the retail mix which plays a significant role in making customers shopping convenient. James and Dwyer (2002) defined a store location as the physical site for a retail business. It is the place where the customer can easily locate the retailer whenever he needs to buy. Thus, the customer is sure of where to go for his shopping after having identified where a particular retail store is located. The store location whether in urban or rural area also provides the retailer the convenience of displaying his merchandise. Consumers prefer retail store that are strategically located with easy accessibility and close proximity to their customers. Consumers look out for location features such as traffic flow and parking lot that are spacious and convenient.

This study focuses on how to determine the retailing skills needs of female foodstuff vendors in Akwa Ibom North West Senatorial district. Female foodstuff vendors in urban and rural areas of the study area are chosen for this study because they are the people who retail foodstuff to consumers in different locations within the Senatorial district. The choice of female foodstuff vendors is also necessitated by the fact that they need retailing skills to help them succeed in their trade ventures. This study looks at the retailing variables such as recordkeeping, storage, public relations, bargaining, opportunity recognition, distribution and forecasting skills needs of urban and rural female foodstuff vendors in Akwa Ibom North West Senatorial district, Nigeria.

### **Statement of the problem**

The researcher observed that the quality and quantity of food produced in Akwa Ibom North West Senatorial district seems not to be enough to meet the demands of the people. That is why female foodstuff vendors in rural and urban areas travel to other neighboring state to purchase food items where food is produced in abundance by the food merchants to increase the quality and quantity of available food in the study area of Akwa Ibom North-West Senatorial district.

Though some of these female foodstuff vendors have acquired education, such education does not equip them with the basic retailing skills that can help them perform better in their trading ventures. Despite contributions by these female foodstuff vendors to making food available at the time needed, most of them do not keep record of their transactions and as such find it difficult to determine the trends of the business in terms of when they make profit and

they suffer losses. Udo (2005) however discovered that about 80 percent of the sole proprietors in Nigeria record their financial transaction in their minds. Where they have poor cognitive faculties or where death occurs accidentally, such transactions perish with the deceased. In such a situation, it is difficult to know who owed and who is owed.

It is noted however that foodstuffs that would have been sold are dumped in the gutter and dustbins due to lack of storage facilities. Infrastructural facilities such as electricity and refrigerators for preservation of foodstuff are not provided by the government. Investigation shows that bad roads, gullies, poor transportation system make distribution of foodstuff by the women foodstuff vendors difficult in the study area (Obi, 2002).

These female foodstuff vendors lack public relations skills and as such cannot keep customers. They also lack other retailing skills such as bargaining, forecasting and opportunity recognition skills which would have enabled their businesses to be more profitable, expansive and sustainable. Their study was therefore conducted to determine the influence of location on the retailing skills need of urban and rural women foodstuff vendors in Akwa Ibom North West Senatorial district, Nigeria.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The major purpose of the study was to determine retailing skill needs of female foodstuff vendors in Akwa Ibom North West Senatorial district.

Specifically, the study was designed to determine:

1. The record-keeping skill needs of urban and rural female foodstuff vendors in Akwa Ibom North-West Senatorial district;
2. The storage skill needs of urban and rural female foodstuff vendors in Akwa Ibom North-West Senatorial district;

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What are the record-keeping skill needs of urban and rural female foodstuff vendors in Akwa Ibom North West Senatorial district?
2. What are the storage skill needs of urban and rural female foodstuff vendors in Akwa Ibom North West Senatorial district?

### **Null Hypothesis**

The following null hypothesis were formulated for the study and were tested at 0.05 level of significance

$H_{01}$  there is no significant difference in the mean responses of urban and rural female foodstuff vendors in Akwa Ibom North West Senatorial district on record-keeping skill needs.

$H_{02}$  there is no significant difference in the mean responses of urban and rural female foodstuff vendors in Akwa Ibom North West Senatorial district on storage skill needs.

### **Literature Review**

#### **Concept of marketing**

Neil (2004) defined a market as a physical place where buyers and sellers gather to exchange goods. Nnoka and Ndope (2012) describe a market as a collection of buyers and sellers who transact business over a particular product. According to social definition, marketing is a

social process by which individual and groups obtain what they need and want through creating, offering and exchanging product and services of value freely with others. As a managerial definition, marketing is described as the art of selling the products but Durker (1958) a leading management theorist says that “the aim of marketing is to make selling superfluous”. Ideally, marketing should result in a consumer who is ready to buy. The aim of marketing is to know and understand the customer so well that the product or services fits him and sell itself.

Marketing concept holds that the key to achieving organizational goals consists of a trader being more effective than her competitors in creating, delivering and communicating customer’s values to her chosen target market. Theodore and Levite (2004) drew a perfect contrast between selling and marketing concepts. Selling focuses on the needs of the seller, marketing on the needs of the buyer. Selling is preoccupied with the sellers need to convert his product into cash, marketing with idea of satisfying the needs of the customer by means of the product and the whole cluster of things, associated with creating, delivering and finally consuming.

Kotler (2003) state that the marketing concept rest on four pillars namely; target market, customer needs, integrated marketing and profitable. Retailers do best when they choose their target marketing programmes. Developing marketing programmes involves targeting the most profitable groups of customers and planning ways that meet their target customers. This can serve as a means of overcoming the challenges of their competitors and enhancing their earning capabilities.

Levite (2004) is of the opinion that retailers can carefully define their target market yet fail to correctly understand the customers’ need. Understanding customer’s needs and wants is not always simple. Some customers have needs of which they are not fully conscious. Some cannot articulate these need or use words that acquire some interpretation. Female foodstuff vendors must have ability to assist their customers and articulate their needs through public relations skill.

The ultimate purpose of marketing is to help organizations and businessmen achieve their objective. These objectives can be achieved through strategic adaptation of basis tenets of marketing. When these women acquire these skills, they would be able to identify the needs of their customers and make effort to satisfy them. Lancaster and Massingham (2005) maintain that one of the most valuable skills marketers should possess is the ability to select, calculate and rally people inside the organization so that all employees enthusiastically participate in external marketing to build satisfying and profitable long-term relationship with customers. Eze (1999) found out that integrated marketing starts with the selection of manager and employers who have position attitude towards the company’s products and its customers. The next step is to train, motivate and empower the entire staff so that they have the knowledge base. As applied to this study, female foodstuff vendors in Akwa Ibom North-West Senatorial district should have the ability to select, educate and carry out clusters of activities to build satisfying and profitable long-term relationship with customers. These skills can be acquired through seminar, training and workshop to aid them in their trading ventures.

The selling concept takes an inside out perceptive. It starts with the factory, focuses on existing product and calls for heavy selling and promotion to produce profitable sales. The marketing concept takes an outside in – perspective. It starts with a well defined market, focuses on customer needs, coordinate activities that affect customer and produces profit by satisfying customers.

The importance of marketing according to Eze (1999) is that through the sale of agriculture products, a farmer is assured of revenue, and marketing directs the prices of agricultural goods. Through a perfect research work, a farmer chooses the very kind of goods and services to enhance his sales. Also consumer's choice of goods and services is reached through a regular request or demand of named services. Marketing brings the buyers and producers together and employs agricultural marketing agents.

Best (2004) also maintained that marketing performs a number of function such as creating an opportunity for everybody to buy products of their choice, and the produces to sell their products within a free market. Storage function is another function provided by marketing. Perishable goods like fruit and vegetables need to be stored very well until they are needed. Goods produced must be transported to where they are needed thus marketing perform this function. Through marketing, movement of goods and services are possible through rail, road, ship, air, plane, truck and telecommunications for non-tangible products such as marketing information. Bert confirmed that for a customer to buy a product, it needs to be relocated to the location where the (consumer) can buy them thus marketing performs this function. Through marketing, consumer product can be processed and changed to a new product like wheat into something the customer can use for example bread, corn into biscuit. Other functions performed by marketing include risk taking and grading of the product so as to suit the initially determined standard quality.

#### **Record Keeping Skill Needs Of Urban and Rural Women Foodstuff Vendors**

Laan (2003) defined record keeping as the system of maintaining business documents so that such record can be found quickly and easily. Record-keeping in any business enterprise cannot be over emphasized especially to ensure that accurate and proper records of business transaction are kept. The smooth running of any organization depends on effective keeping of customers' records. These records serve the purpose of referring to the past and projection/suggestions for the future. However on a close look at the business sectors, one finds that records are not kept at all or not properly kept especially by women foodstuff vendors. Nwangu (2005) equally observed that Nigerians do not have a developed record-keeping culture in business sectors. Record should be adequately stored and preserved for easy reference and retrieval. In support of the need for keeping business records, Udo (2005) stated that all business no matter their level of operations, ultimately evolve into acts relating to buying and selling or borrowing and lending and they deal either with the money and goods or with the receiving and giving of services, such as those rendered by salesmen and clients. Unless the trader keeps a careful record of all his transactions, he would have no reliable knowledge of his progress and if his business transactions become numerous, the absence of regular and systematic records must soon result in hopeless confusion. Udo (2005) affirmed that this observation is not an exaggeration, as experience has shown that about 80 percent of the sole proprietors in Nigeria record their financial transaction in their minds. Where they have poor cognitive faculties or where death occurs accidentally, such transaction perish with the deceased venture. This is the reason for the epidemic failure of small business in Nigeria.

Davidson (2012) highlighted the objectives of record-keeping in marketing to include:

1. To offer information on the extent of sales done within a time period.
2. To inform on areas requiring business action to be taken.

Good recordkeeping skills are important part of every successful business. Eny (2009) stated that good record keeping benefits the trade in the following ways:

- It enhances better internal control of the business and helps in business planning and decision making.
- It is an essential source of evidence to detect business losses, internal fraud and theft.
- It helps in reducing cost effect on collating information when preparing for the purchase of new market stock.

According to Effiok (2007), traders are expected to put in place good recordkeeping system to ensure that information relating to business could be easily accessed through proper document. The different types of records that business operators need to keep include source document and accounting records. The source document substantiates all transaction in a business. For example, receipt, invoice and other relevant documents issued or received from customer and suppliers. The accounting records includes manual or electronic records of asset and liabilities, revenue and expenses as well as gain (and losses).

The marketing concept suggests that a business best achieves its long term objectives through effective and efficient record keeping (Essien, 2004). All the transactions of a business must be recorded and referred to as when need arises. Recordkeeping encourages trader to make decisions regarding gains, losses, purchase of new stock and expansion of business asset. Essien pointed out that by keeping adequate account record, a trader is able to show the following:

1. What is owed to the business, and by whom?
2. What is owed by the business, and to whom?
3. Whether the business is gaining or losing.
4. The source of gains or losses.
5. The amount of sole proprietor's capital in the business if solvent, or the amount of her deficiency, if insolvent.
6. The nature and value of all property, possessions and liabilities of the business.

### **Store Skill Needs of Urban and Rural Women Foodstuff Vendors**

Osinem (2008) defined storage as the process of keeping or putting something in place while it is not being used. The storage of market commodity by traders requires skills. The market commodities are for sale and are generally in continuous demand by consumers or customers. Storage is therefore important because it allows for a smooth and uninterrupted flow of products into the market (Otti. 2002). According to Akpan (2010), storage of commodity in excess of the immediate demand allows for continuous flow and availability of the commodity even when manufacturers have adjusted the timing supply. Then, commodities that were already stored by the traders will continue to serve the demand until production is resumed by the manufactures.

Storage serves to ensure that products are available throughout the year. In this way, storage helps to stabilize prices and the availability of seasonal products. It helps the producers to manage supply and demand or production and consumption. It produces time utility to buyers and sellers. Stem (2005) highlighted disadvantages of storage to include cost of insurance on the stored products, taxes, obsolesces or spoilage, theft or pilfering and warehouse operating cost. Storage is done in a place called warehouse.

The storage skills of the women foodstuff vendors seems to be an important incentive for them in terms of creating value for their products and increasing their income base. In marketing, supply often exceeds demand at every given time. The traders require huge capital to stock large quantities of market products. This calls for acquisition of storage skills for the women that are trading in agricultural products, According to Ajakaiye (2006), these women should recognize the fact that glut reduces the prices of products and excessive supply of the product contributes to

huge wastage, the storage function is one of balancing in supply and demand (Katter, 1999). Both traders and consumers gain from a marketing system when products are properly stored over time and made available when needed. Harte (2002) and Bassey (2004) observed that market women who trade on foodstuff are at risk of wastage when there is a slump in marketing demand. To avoid wastage in the period of low demand, the traders resort to storing the products. Storage is therefore, useful not only to conserve the products but also to serve as marketing storage facility that provides gains to the traders when the stored product is in short supply.

Ajakaiye (2006) asserted that adequate storage requires proper knowledge of the product to be stored and proper storage skills. The market women should note that physical damage to food items can arise from bad handling, crushing, inappropriate transport and other controllable factors. Damage of food items can also occur due to the attack of mobile insect, larvae or rodent. Physical damage to food items by insects and rodent can lead to high percentage loss.

Abiola (2009) noted that proper storage skill would demand knowledge of the types of storage for food crops, in his research on grain storage, he also found out that grain storage could be done in two ways:

1. The storage where the grain is stored in raw form after harvesting and initial processing into storage or containers.
2. The secondary storage where the grain or food crop is processed into other consumables or other usable products for instance, maize processed into maize flour before storage.

In addition Abiola further found that the major causes of maize spoilage are improper and inappropriate handling, inadequate drying and storing of method employed. It was recommended that women foodstuff vendors should develop the skill of storing process food items like maize, flour, rice, beans, yam, plantain, and corn in bags.

Consequently, Brin (2006) ascertained that both growers and consumers gain from a marketing system that can make products available when it is needed. A farmer, merchant, trader store products and provide services. These services cost money and there are risk in the form of wastage and slump in market demand and prices hence storage of marketing products provides reward in the form of profit. Kibble (2000) observed that since storage facilities are lacking, these women are forced to sell at harvest to whatever market would pay. Storage therefore is useful not only to conserve the crop but to serve as a marketing tool that helps sustain them in their trades. The storage skills of women foodstuff vendors are an important incentive for them in terms of creating value for their products and increasing their income base. The sustainability in their trading business can better be achieved if they adopt the storage skills in their trade.

## **Conclusions**

Based on the findings of this study, the conclusion reached was that equal proportion of urban and rural female foodstuff vendors needs the record keeping skills in recording income from sales. Majority of rural female foodstuff vendors need skill in recording names of those who owe and the amount. There was significant difference in the mean response of urban and rural women on record keeping skill need of women foodstuff vendors. Higher proportion of the urban female foodstuff vendors need the storage skills in storing foodstuff in baskets, cupboards or bags, and skills in storing grain in local silos. Both rural and urban female foodstuff retailers need skills in foodstuff vendors before they rot away. There was significant difference in the mean responses of urban and rural women on recordkeeping skills need of women foodstuff vendors. On public relations, majority of the urban and rural women need skills in appreciating customers for their patronage. The rural women specifically need skills in communicating clearly

with customers, the female foodstuff vendors generally need the opportunity recognition skills in recognizing gap in demand and supply of a particular product are skills in recognizing new business opportunities. There was no significant difference in the mean responses of urban and rural women on opportunity recognition skills for foodstuff vendors.

### **Recommendation**

Based on the findings of the study and the discussion outlined herein, the following recommendations were made:

1. Ministry of Education should be involved in this area through policy formulation in the area of curriculum formulation. All the lapses identified in the study should be taken care of in revitalizing the curriculum. Market women association in collaboration with ministry of Commerce. Trade and industry should organize training workshop and seminar, stressing the need to enhance development of the skills required in their business ventures. In terms of financing, the existing policy of government should be made known to both the urban and rural women foodstuff vendors through organized Women Community Association (WCA) so that they could have access to funds. To encourage them benefit from the loan, obstacle like collateral should be removed so that they can have easy access to the funds.
2. Women foodstuff vendors should be properly trained by Ministry of Commerce, Trade and Industry on how to keep proper records of their business transactions in subsidiary books of accounts like day book, cashbook, and purchase day book receipt. This should be done through adult education programmes.
3. Provision and installation of storage facilities in local and urban market by the Ministry of Trade and Commerce is highly recommended.
4. Women foodstuff vendors should be properly educated by Market Women Association through seminars and workshops on the proper ways of welcoming and communicating with customers so as to encourage customers repeat their visits to the shop or maintain the customers.



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