

Information Behaviour and Socio-Economic Empowerment of Textile Market Women in Southern Nigeria

Adekanye, Adetoun^{1*}, Haliso, Yacob²

1, University Library, University of Lagos, NIGERIA.

2, Professor of Information Resources Management, Babcock University, Nigeria.

Abstract: *Information and empowerment are inextricable intertwined and access to quality and relevant information will help people to cope with demands placed upon them by their environment which will enable them to function better. 20% from the total population of the textile market women from two geo-political zones in Nigeria were selected as sample for the study. Questionnaire based on standard format was employed to obtain qualitative responses from the textile market women. Findings established a positive relationship between information behaviour and socio-economic empowerment of textile market women. Results indicated that the Nigerian textile market women were innovative, dynamic and creative in their entrepreneurial activities when they were empowered with information. Implications of the findings were discussed and recommendation offered.*

Keywords: *Information, socio-economic empowerment, information needs, information-seeking, information use*

I. Introduction

The role of information in the day-to-day affairs of women cannot be over-emphasised. Studies have revealed that the quality of information has a way of shaping how information seekers priorities the variety of information available to them. This is closely related to factors such as ease in use, accessibility and preference of source which can possible influence decision making. Through analysis of facts, the importance of information, its relevance, and its utility are three interrelated concepts that have been found to affect an individual's information selection.

Like any other group in the society, women empowerment is an important concept in socio-economic and national development. One of the United Nations conventions supports the empowerment of women in the area of women's human rights according to Beijing Platform of Action 1996. Beyond this; one of the eight cardinal programmes of Millennium Goal Development Goals recognises empowerment of women. Market women make significant contributions to the economy, thus they need information for survival and to develop their businesses. Textile trading is an indigenous economic enterprise engaged by most rural and urban women in Nigeria. Textile activities are wide spread in Nigeria and women are predominantly visible in this sector such as we have them in Balogun Market in Lagos state as stated by Olutayo and Yusuff (2012) or Onisha Main Market, Eke Ukwu Market in Imo State all in Nigeria.

There have been studies that focus on women in general and in so many aspects globally; not much research activities have been recorded in the area of information behaviour of women groups dealing with textile trading activities in Nigeria. To this extend, thus the study focuses on the information behaviour of women in textile industry in Nigeria as it affects their socio-economic status.

It is envisaged the research will include a practical research element to investigate questions raised in the study, primarily in accessing information behaviour and needs of women that will be useful for them in their textile marketing.

1.2 Scope of the study:

This study focused on information behaviour in relation to socio-economic empowerment of the textile market women in the South-East and South-West Nigeria. The study covered two major markets - one in the city and the other in the interior – within each of the selected geo-political zones in Nigeria. Participants of the study are limited to only market women who trade basically in textile materials

1.3 Significance of the Study:

The study would be of great significance to market women, as they are limited in their level of knowledge and skills in searching for information. The findings of the study would also help market women to become aware of relevant information sources that they can use to meet their information needs. It would also

enhance the earning power of women in textile trading and improve their strategies toward capacity development through access to viable information.

Moreover, the study would create awareness among government agencies and other stakeholders of the basic problems facing market women as they conduct their businesses. The results from this study are expected to help to design a suitable strategy for information service provision for the market sector and textile market women in Nigeria. The study would further provide opportunities for enlightenment programmes through which investors would be encouraged to look towards the direction of market women for assistance. Apart from this, findings of the study would as well make the textile market women to become knowledgeable, innovative, dynamic and skillful in their daily activities. Information behaviour of individuals can either make or mar his/her knowledge horizon; a well-informed person is favourably disposed to personal, social and economic development. It is obvious that, when a group of individuals in a community is developed, then community development is inevitable.

Lastly, the study would also contribute to the improvement of the lives of market women by increasing textile market women's access to paid employments, land, credit and other productive resources to a high degree. Given the prominent place of economy in national development and the fight against poverty, it is important that women's participation is increased in all key economic institutions and decision making bodies in the regions under study and all over the nation at large.

1.4 Methodology:

A questionnaire was used to solicit both qualitative and quantitative data, copies of questionnaires were distributed among the textile market women in South-western and South-eastern zones in Nigeria by the researcher in conjunction with eight (8) trained research assistants who were familiar with the terrain, language and culture of each location of the selected zones for 10 weeks. A total number of 1,600 questionnaires were distributed and 1,578 were filled and returned, 1,566 were found useful for analysis which resulted to a response rate of 97%. The instruments were analysed using Pearson Product Moment-Correlation (PPMC) and Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) software version 15.0 was used for data analysis.

II. Review of Literature

Studies in information behaviour are well researched areas in the world by various scholars with findings indicating distinct information behaviour pertaining to each group of people under studied. Despite of the high level of interest generated by the field in the last decades, the available studies in Nigeria with the exception of Aboyade (1987), Momodu (2002) and Njoku (2004), concentrated on professional groups mostly within institutions and in the urban settlements. In a recent review of studies on the information behaviour of indigenous people of several developing countries, Dutta (2009) in his study also reported of existing of a relatively small numbers of studies on the information behaviour of the citizens of the developing countries and also few numbers available concentrated on the education of individuals located in the large cities than on citizens who live in the rural areas.

Davidson and Lingan (1997) as cited by Padma, et al (2013) asserted that the understanding of information needs and information seeking behaviour of various groups is essential as it helps in planning, implementation and operation of information system and services in the given work setting.

Information behaviour as captured by Wilson (2000) and Bates (2010) is an umbrella term that captures human information needs, information seeking and information use. Therefore, information behaviour is the totality of human behaviour in relation to sources and channel of information, an act a person may engage in when identifying his needs for information, searching for information in any way and using or transferring that information.

Information needs as conceived in the study is influenced by the context in which the person functions. These include the individual personality, traits, social, political, economic or technological environment and the roles he plays in different social contexts. Factors that give rise to information needs include seeking answers, reducing uncertainties, bridging gaps and solving problems; recognition of an information need is the impetus for information seeking.

Information seeking arises as a consequence of a need perceived by an information user who, in order to satisfy that need, makes demand upon formal or informal information sources or services which may result in success or failure to find relevant information. It should be noted here that information seeking behaviour involve other people through information exchange and that information perceived as useful may be based on other people. Information obtained become part of the individual's knowledge and it is employed in solving a problem or making a decision.

Information use implies application of information either in problem solving or decision making which should lead to improvement of a person in the word of Jim and Bouthille (2005). In other words, information

use is meant to effect a change or changes in the state of knowledge of an individual and such change could be increased awareness, understanding of a situation, and individual capability to solve a problem

The implication of information use for this study is that it translates into empowerment of users by granting them access to opportunities and self-development. Empowerment is the enhanced ability of any person to make best possible choice from better alternatives available that could bring about significant improvement in the socioeconomic conditions of such people. Empowerment is therefore, measured by the degree of socio-economic independence, decision making at household level, decision making within the group and self-perception. All these individual factors influence the overall level of empowerment. Importantly, empowerment as methodology is often associated with feminism and that is why studying socio-economic empowerment of Nigerian textile market women is important at this time in history.

Socio-economic empowerment is a phrase understood to be a process of developing a sense of autonomy, self-confidence, control of resources and participation in decision making by the people acting individually and collectively to change social relations and institutions and discourses that exclude poor people and keep them in poverty (Blomkvist, 2003). The involvement of women in socio-economic activities cannot be underestimated in which Ajayi (2001) and Afolabi (2003) highlighted the socio-economic activities engaged in by women in Nigeria to include: farming, trading, bead-making, cloth-weaving, dyeing, mat-weaving, soap-making, pottery, hair dressing, fashion designing, which varies and subsistence in nature.

The increasing involvement and participation of women in socio-economic activities in Nigeria is borne out of the general concern by women, especially those in the rural area/sector, to alleviate the economic conditions of their households. According to Williams (2006) persistent poverty and deteriorating economic conditions have forced many women to work outside the normal status quo, compelling them to venture into various economic activities while at the same time continuing to perform their traditional household chores.

In other words, present-day women are no longer confined to traditional gender roles of wives and mothers but also are involved as wage workers and income earners of their families. Nwagwu and Ifeanacho (2009) affirmed that most times, the contributions of women are trivialized and disregarded when in actual fact they bear the brunt of the families' economic burden. According to Sabo (2007), women contribute about 60% of the labour force to agricultural production and produce 80% of food; yet they earn only 10% of the monetary income and own fewer assets. In the same vein, Ukachi (2007) corroborated this opinion by emphasizing that women bear almost all the responsibilities for meeting the basic needs of the family; yet they are systematically denied the resources, information and freedom of action they need to fulfill this responsibility.

The significance of information in enhancing socio-economic development cannot be over-emphasized, considering the fact that information is power. The ability to have accurate and timely information will enable efficiency and increase skill (Olorunda, 2004). Thus, there is need for conscious effort by all stakeholders to strive to add value to information and make it more relevant to women. Access to adequate and timely information with a clear communication strategy that would raise public awareness and influence women in their businesses and careers would produce positive changes in the world. According to Brandin and Harrison (2000) information is now a new type of capital knowledge which must be available, adequate, and adequately flow for utilisation by women. However, information that will enhance economic empowerment must be exact and precise and must also add value to the receiver.

Four hypotheses were formulated to guide the study and tested at 0.05 level of significance.

H₀₁. There is no significant relationship between recognition of information needs and the socio-economic empowerment of textile market women in Southern Nigeria

H₀₂. There is no significant relationship between information seeking behaviour and socio-economic empowerment of textile market women in Southern Nigeria

H₀₃. There is no significant relationship between information use and socio-economic empowerment of textile market women in Southern Nigeria

H₀₄. There is no significant relationship between level of challenges faced on information behaviour and the socio-economic empowerment of the textile market women in Southern Nigeria

III. Data Presentations

3.1 Testing of the Hypotheses

3.1.1 H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between recognition of information needs and the socio-economic empowerment of textile market women in Nigeria.

Hypothesis 1 was to determine the relationship between recognition of information needs and the socio-economic empowerment of textile market women in Nigeria. The finding is as shown in table 1 overleaf. The correlation coefficients obtained was 0.146 ($p < 0.001$) which showed that though there existed a very weak positive correlation between socio-economic empowerment and information needs, the relationship was nevertheless very significantly.

Table 1: Result of correlation coefficients of recognition empowerment of Textile Market Women of information needs and socio-economic empowerment of TMW

Variables	N	Mean	Std. D	r	Sign	Remark
Information needs	1487	16.98	3.96			
				.146	.000	Significant
Socio-economic Empowerment	1487	34.86	12.59			

The analysis has shown in Table 1 above revealed that there was a significant positive relationship between identification of information needs and the socio-economic empowerment of the textile market women ($r = 0.15$; $p = 0.000 < 0.05$). Therefore, null hypothesis one was rejected. It could thus be concluded that there was a significant relationship between identification of information needs and socio-economic empowerment of textile market women in Nigeria. Hypothesis 1 in the null form states that, there is no significant relationship between recognition of information needs and socio-economic empowerment of textile market women in Nigeria. The data were analyzed using Pearson Product-Moment Correlation (PPCM) showing relationship between information needs and socio-economic empowerment of textile market women in Nigeria.

The finding supports that of other researchers like Reiketta (2005) and Riketta and Dick (2005) who found that stronger identification of information need can lead to higher level of jobs satisfaction, more extra-role behaviour and lower feeling of interest to leave. Also, research has shown that job satisfaction among employees may lead to positive behaviours toward customers which in turn will enhance customer's satisfaction (Bernhardt, et al. 2000, Schlesinger and Zornitsky, 1991, Donovan and Hocutt, 2001).

The implication of this to the study is that the more the textile market women in Nigeria identify their information needs in market related areas, the higher their socio-economic empowerment. According to Kamber (2009), needs are satisfied through various kinds of activities and each of which requires information as an input. That is why Panos (2001) emphasises that access to information is an essential condition for development and empowerment.

3.1.2 Hypothesis 2: H_{02} : There is no significant relationship between information seeking behaviour and the socio-economic empowerment of textile market women in Nigeria:

Hypothesis 2 was to determine the relationship between recognition of information seeking and the socio-economic empowerment of textile market women in Nigeria. To test this hypothesis, Pearson product Moment-coefficient was adopted testing at 0.05 level of significance. The correlation coefficient obtained was 0.383 ($p < 0.001$) which implied that there was a significantly weak positive correlation between information seeking behavior and socio-economic empowerment. The finding is as shown in table 2.

Table 2: Result of correlation coefficients of relationship between information seeking behaviour and socio-economic empowerment of TMW in Southern Nigeria

Variables	N	Mean	Std. D	R	Sign	Remark
Information Seeking Behaviour	1487	58.96	10.46			
				.383	.000	Significant
Socio-economic Empowerment	1487	34.86	12.59			

The analysis presented in Table 2 above also revealed that there was a significant positive relationship between information seeking and the socio-economic empowerment of the textile market women ($r = 0.38$; $p = 0.000 < 0.05$). Therefore, null hypothesis two was therefore rejected. Thus, a significant relationship between information seeking, and socio-economic empowerment of textile market women was established.

This result was in line with that of Raza, et al. (2010) that information seeking behaviour is a complex activity, requiring access to diverse information resources to deal with work-related, personal and social information problems. Access to basic information empowers individual and enables that individual to make rational decisions which can reduce the level of uncertainty. Keller and Mbwewe (1991) as cited in Rowland (1995) attested to the above assertion that information seeking empowers women to organize themselves to increase their own self-reliance and to assert their independent rights, to make choices, and to control resources.

The implication of this is that, the more an individual seeks for related information, the higher the socio-economic empowerment is brought about and the higher the choice of tendency for skill development and income-earning opportunities to take place.

3.1.3 H₀₃: There is no significant relationship between information use and the socio- economic empowerment of textile market women in Nigeria.

Hypothesis 3 was tested at 0.05 level of significance using Pearson's product moments coefficient as Table 3 above reported the result of the test. The correlation coefficient of 0.198 (p<0.001) showed that there existed a weak positive correlation between socio-economic empowerment and information use. The correlation coefficient actually showed a significant relationship between socio-economic empowerment and information use but the regression coefficient did show a not significant linear relationship between them. The reason for this discrepancy could be adduced to the fact that in correlation, information use is bi-variant with socio-economic empowerment while in the regression model; it acted in conjunction with those other variables.

Table 3: Result of correlation coefficients of relationship between information use and socio-economic empowerment of TMW in Nigeria

Variables	N	Means	SD	r	Sign	Remark
Information use	1487	47.90	15.72			
				.198	.000	Significant
Socio-economic Empowerment	1487	34.86	12.59			

The analysis shown in Table 3 revealed further that there was a significant positive relationship between information use and the socio-economic empowerment of the textile market women (r = 0.20; p= 0.000<0.05). Therefore, null hypothesis three was rejected. Therefore, it can be concluded that there is a significant relationship between information use and socio-economic empowerment of textile market women in Nigeria. The information from the study also revealed that there is a significant positive relationship between information use and the socio-economic empowerment of the textile market women (r = 0.20; p= 0.000<0.05) (see table 4.16). Therefore, null hypothesis three was rejected. Therefore, it can be concluded that there is a significant relationship between information use and socio-economic empowerment of textile market women in Nigeria. Information is seen as key resources that can aid development. Mayer, (2003), Gursten (2003) had earlier emphasised that effective use of information can support economic development and social change. Access to basic and additional information will eventually empower an individual. Successful universal access to information and the use depends not only on the availability and affordability of infrastructure, but also on the availability and quality of suitable content and application. The implication of this is that, availability and use of information enable the individual or groups of people to make rational decisions and reduce their levels of uncertainty.

3.1.1.4 H₀₄: There is no significant relationship between level of challenges faced on information behaviour and the socio-economic empowerment of textile market women in Nigeria.

Hypothesis 4 was set to determine whether there was a significant relationship between level of challenges faced on information behaviour and the socio-economic empowerment of textile market women in Nigeria or not. The correlation coefficient between socio-economic empowerment and challenges of information behaviour was 0.045 (p>0.001) which implied that the correlation was very weakly positive and not significant.

Table 4: Summary of Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Showing Relationship between Challenges of Information Behaviour and the Socio-economic Empowerment of the Textile Market Women

Variables	N	Mean	Std.D	r	Sig.	Remark
Challenges of Information Behaviour	1566	1.82	1.41			
				.045	.086	NS
Socio-economic Empowerment	1566	34.87	12.59			

The analysis carried out in Table 4 above revealed that there was no significant relationship between challenges of information behaviour and the socio-economic empowerment of textile market women (r = 0.45; p= 0.86>0.05). Therefore, hypothesis four was not rejected. Thus, it could be concluded that there was no significant and relationship between of challenges facing textile market women in information seeking and the level of socio-economic empowerment of textile market women in Nigeria.

The finding above supported the submissions of International Labour Organizations (2009) and Kabeer (2008) that women experience barriers in almost every aspect of work whether they have paid work or not, the type of work they obtain or are excluded from, the availability of support services such as childcare, their pay, benefits and conditions of work, the insecurity of their jobs or enterprises, their success in vocational training. Ways around these by Department for International Development (DFID) (2010) are that, productive employment and decent work in developing countries are the main routes out of these barriers for both men and women. Women's participation in the labour market can be increased by addressing constraint and barriers

facing accessing work, including public employment programmes by providing well-focused vocational trainings. Social protection measures can enhance the productivity and participation of poor women

3.1.1.5 Summary of the Study:

The study was carried out to investigate the information behaviour and socio-economic empowerment of textile market women in Nigeria. The study is an ex-post-facto type and adopted survey research design. Disproportional stratified random sampling technique was used to select the specific markets for the study. Purposive sampling technique was used to select two geo-political zones in Nigeria. Respondents were randomly selected from 22 markets across 11 states from the southeastern and southwestern parts of Nigeria. The main objectives of this study was to evaluate the relationship among information behaviour in terms of information needs, information seeking behaviour and information use and socio-economic empowerment' of textile market women in Nigeria using four hypotheses.

1. Information-seeking, information sources, and information needs are the information behaviours that influenced Nigerian textile market women's socio-economic empowerment.
2. There is a joint relationship between textile market women's information behaviours and their socio-economic empowerment. These information behaviours accounted for 23% of the total variance in the women's socio-economic empowerment and this composite influence is statistically significant.
3. There is a significant positive relationship between identification of information needs and socio-economic empowerment of textile market women in Nigeria.
4. There is a significant positive relationship between information-seeking and socioeconomic empowerment of textile market women in Nigeria.
5. There is a positive relationship between information use and socio-economic empowerment of textile market women in Nigeria, and
6. Finally, there is no significant relationship between challenges and information behaviour and socio-economic empowerment of textile market women in Nigeria.

IV. Conclusion

Information behaviour of Nigerian textile market women in terms of needs, seeking, sources, and use have significant influence on their socio-economic empowerment. The study has fore grounded the various sources from where women generally and Nigerian textile market women in particular, could draw relevant information to meet their information needs. Furthermore, information empowerment informs the Nigerian textile market women to become innovative, dynamic and creative in their entrepreneurial activities which invariably would bring about self sustainability and societal development.

Women empowerment is an indispensable tool for advancing development and reducing poverty. It should be noted that women empowerment cannot be only left in the hands of government alone, Non-governmental organizations, all stakeholders, most especially, the private sectors should all come onboard to make real mark in the field of corporate social responsibility (CSR) which will complement government efforts.

V. Recommendations

Based on the findings, the researcher makes the following recommendations:

1. There should be joint effort by local government authorities, non governmental bodies and market women associations in organizing trainings for market women through which information relating to their businesses and social life will be discussed. This can be used to improve the information behaviour of these women as new members will be well trained and have reasonable background information before starting their business while old members will also be informed on how to improve their business.
2. Stakeholders (Information Professionals, NGO's, Market Women Associations, Government) should come together to provide information centres within the reach of market women. This will enhance regular access to needed information on regular basis.
3. Government and other stakeholders should intensify efforts at setting up women friendly micro finance outfits and medium-size enterprises in both formal and informal sectors as way to sustain the socio-economic development of women.
4. Leadership tussles in most markets across Nigeria constitute a security risk that warrants government attention and interventions. In recent past, this has led to breaking down of peace and order among market communities which on many occasions have resulted in loss of lives and properties. Adequate security measures should be put in place in terms of stationing security personnel in major markets in Nigeria.
5. Fire outbreaks are frequent occurrence in major markets across Nigeria. Government should equip fire fighters with functional facilities with which to combat such situations. Besides, they should be encouraged to rise to the occasion before the situation gets out of hand. Market women and men should also be taught

on how to use fire extinguishers whenever the need arises, and should be mandated to have fire extinguishers in their various stalls.

6. Ancient market stalls should be rebuilt to meet modern market standard with necessary amenities that will aid conveniences within the markets.
7. Stakeholders should develop a strategy of organizing workshops, seminars, training and re-training for market women. Trade Fair shows should be organised where marketers and manufacturers can come together to display their wares and product, rub minds together on areas affecting productivities and performances.
8. Challenges and obstacles facing the market women should be turned into legitimate policy papers. Advocates using public forum media should target and put pressures upon legislators to change laws that are discriminate

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