

# **AWARENESS AND UTILIZATION OF CONSUMER INFORMATION BY HOMEMAKERS IN KOGI EAST SENATORIAL DISTRICT OF KOGI STATE: COUNSELLING IMPLICATIONS**

*Grace Otini Oguche and Aminu Sanni, (Ph.D)*

## **Abstract**

This study was designed to investigate whether homemakers in Kogi East Senatorial District are aware of and utilize consumer information available to them. Three sections of research questions were answered. The study tested three null hypotheses. Questionnaire was used for data collection, which was also used as interview schedule for non-literate homemakers. Target population of 3,000 was made up of adult female homemakers in Kogi East Senatorial District of Kogi State out of which a sample of 750 homemakers were randomly selected. Mean and standard deviation were used for the analysis while t-test was used to test the three null hypotheses. The major findings are that: both urban and rural homemakers are aware of most consumer information, urban homemakers utilize consumer information more than rural homemakers, the major sources of consumer information is through radio broadcast and there is the provision of consumer information with the use of local language. The counseling implications amongst others include the exploration of information on goods and services best suited for the family.

Human beings utilize a myriad of goods and services for survival and improvement of their living standards they desire satisfaction for their goods and services. When in a shop, supermarkets or local markets, the homemaker may find herself inadequately prepared to make purchases for one reason or the other. Many of them have ended up not getting their money's worth because they lack knowledge on how to judge quality of products they pay for. Akagwu (1997) noted that homemakers are often confused and find it difficult to make intelligent choices among competing brands of goods that are on sale. This may not be unconnected with lack of adequate information about the different available brands. It follows, therefore, that they should possess adequate knowledge about what they purchase and use in terms of quality, price, where the items could be obtained and how to utilize the items (Ameh, 2004).

Consumer information are those vital pieces of information that are made available to homemakers by the manufacturers of various goods and services. Information about available products and services is passed through the advertising agents to members of the public. Homemakers therefore become aware of these products/ goods and services and look out for them as the need for such arise in their homes.

Wyllie (1997) defined a consumer as any person, business firm or government unit that choose goods and services primarily to satisfy its own merits. Anyakoha and Eluwa (1999) also defined a consumer as any person who makes use of goods and services to satisfy personal or household needs. In the context of this work, a consumer is any adult female that is responsible for purchasing personal or family needs.

The New Webster Dictionary of the English Language (2004) defined a Homemaker as someone responsible for the running of a household A, homemaker, in the context of this study, is any married woman that is responsible for the purchasing of goods and services for the upkeep of her household: In Nigeria, homemakers are traditionally charged with the responsibilities of selecting, purchasing and directing the use of household goods and services for the family, Such responsibilities are not only tasking but also demanding, as there are so many brands of the same products/goods as well as many services available in today's market for the homemakers to choose from.

In Kogi State like in any other state in Nigeria, some homemakers live in urban areas who are better informed while others live in rural areas. Exposure to such information probably places urban homemakers at greater advantage over the rural counterparts. As a result of techno-scientific advancement, the number of goods on sale in the market range from various brands of the same or similar products to different grades and assorted packages of the same or similar products. Homemakers are therefore faced with the task of choice of goods and services for their families as shopping become more complex. Sasse (1997) noted that for a homemaker to be a good consumer, she must take time to become familiar with available products and prices. She should also read and seek to know what features to look for or avoid when buying products.

Whether homemakers in Kogi East Senatorial District are equipped with information concerning goods and services which they purchase is still uncertain. This information not only act as guide for intelligent and wise purchase of goods and services but also enhance their proper or effective utilization.

This study therefore, seeks to ascertain whether or not homemakers in Kogi East Senatorial District of Kogi State are aware and utilize consumer information.

### **Statement of the Problem**

In today's markets, some goods are available in so many brands which are presented in different shapes, colours, wraps., brands, names, prices, qualities, diet restriction, sizes, package, good appearance, composition of nutrients, production/manufacturing dates, expiration date, mode of use, NAFDAC numbers, tastes, durability/effectiveness of products and colours of products, making the job of selection and purchase of goods a complex task for homemakers. Ukpete (1993) noted that in the purchase and use of goods and services homemakers are faced with the problem of being lured by claims of some mass media for advertisement. Enigheno (1990) also noted that, other problems homemakers faced in their purchases of goods and services included where and when to buy quality goods.

Homemakers need adequate information to be able to buy product effectively at it is generally believed that knowledge is power, that is, power to direct one towards a more fruitful destiny. Based on this fact, the present study is embarked upon to find out whether or not homemakers in the Kogi East Senatorial District of Kogi State are aware of and utilize consumer information.

### **Methodology**

The survey design was used for this study. This study was carried out in Kogi East Senatorial District of Kogi State comprising Nine Local Government Areas. The population for the study comprises of homemakers (married women) from the nine (9) Local Government Areas that make up Kogi East Senatorial District of Kogi State, These homemakers are housewives responsible for carrying out domestic tasks in their homes and they reside in both urban and rural areas of the state. They are all together three thousand (3,000) National Population Commission (NPC, 2003). The sample of the study consists of seven hundred and fifty homemakers randomly selected from the population. Randomization ensured that every member of the population had an equal and independent chance of being drawn from the population, thus, complying with the law of probability (Ali, 1996).

A researcher - developed instrument was used for the study. The questionnaire was developed based on literature review as well as research questions. The questionnaire was distributed to literate-homemakers and it also served as an interview guide for non-literate homemakers. The questionnaire was divided into three sections (A,B and C). Section 'A' sought information on the extent of awareness and utilization of respondents section 'B' elicits information on problems encountered by homemakers in the utilization of consumer information while section 'C' dealt with enhancing awareness and utilization of consumer information by homemakers in the study area. The response category for items in parts of sections A,B and C were rated on four point Likert type of strongly agree 4, agree 3, disagree 2, and strongly disagree. The reliability of the instrument was established using Cronbach Alpha reliability test. This yielded a coefficient of 0.91 which indicated a high degree of reliability. The validation of the instrument was carried out by two experts from the department of vocational and Technical Education, University of Nigeria, Nsukka and one expert from the Department of Measurement and Evaluation, University of Nigeria, Nsukka. Data generated from the

*Awareness and Utilization of Consumer Information by Homemakers in Kogi East Senatorial District of Kogi State: Counselling Implication*

---

use of the questionnaire was analyzed using mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions. Any item with the mean of 2.50 and above was considered agreed upon while any item less than a mean of 2.50 was considered disagreed upon. The t-test was used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 alpha level of significance.

### **Need for the Study**

Available and accessible studies on awareness and utilization of consumer information show that much fruitful efforts have not been made to cover wide geographical area of Nigeria. Kogi state, for instance, is scarcely mentioned in such studies. The present study is therefore, significant in respect of the fact that if published, it may educate homemakers in the study area on the importance of consumer information.

Secondly if the findings of this study are published in journals and Newspapers and are widely read, it will be useful to consumer educators in determining the focus for consumer education programme in the area.

The findings of the study will also be useful to advertising agencies, manufacturers of goods and homemakers to the advertising agencies, the finding will help to awaken them on their roles in elective communication. To the manufacturers, the findings will sensitize them on the need to give adequate information on their products.

Discussions on the findings of this study can sensitize homemakers on the need to be aware of and utilize consumer information. This is likely to enhance their choice of foods and services. It equally has implications for counseling education. The counselling implications will also be concial to the family.

### **Purpose of the Study**

Generally, the purpose of this study is to find out if homemakers in Kogi East Senatorial District of Kogi State are aware of and utilize consumer information. Specifically, the study aims at determining.

1. The extent to which homemakers in Kogi East Senatorial District of Kogi State are aware of consumer information.
2. The extent to which homemakers in Kogi East Senatorial District of Kogi State utilize consumer information.
3. The sources of consumer information for homemakers in Kogi East Senatorial District of Kogi State.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions guided the study;

1. To what extent are homemakers in Kogi East Senatorial District of Kogi aware of consumer information?
2. To what extent do homemakers in Kogi East Senatorial district of Kogi State utilize consumer information available to them?
3. What are the sources of consumer information for homemakers in Kogi East Senatorial District of Kogi State?

### **Hypotheses**

The following null hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 alpha level of significance.

1. There is no significant difference in the mean response of urban and rural homemakers on the extent of their awareness of consumer information
2. There is no significant difference in the mean response of urban and rural homemakers on the extent of their utilization of consumer information
3. There is no significant difference in the mean response of urban and rural homemakers on their sources of information

### **Presentation of Results**

#### **Research Question 1**

To what extent are urban and rural homemakers in Kogi East Senatorial District of Kogi State aware

of consumer information?

**Table 1: Mean Response of Urban and Rural Homemakers on extent of Awareness of Consumer Information**

S/No	Items	Urban		Rural	
		X <sub>u</sub>	SD <sub>u</sub>	X <sub>R</sub>	SD <sub>R</sub>
1.	Brand name	3.62	0.64	3.59	0.80
2.	Price of goods	3.62	0.64	3,16	0.89
3.	Quantity of goods	2.58	1.14	2,69	1.05
4.	Diet restriction	2.77	1,08	2.35	0.71
5.	Size/quality of goods	3.17	0.83	3,42	0.76
6.	Type of package	2.69	1.04	2,97	0.94
7.	Food appearance	3.68	0.52	2,90	0.87
8.	Composition of food	2.91	0.92	2,67	1.03
9.	Production/Manufacturers date	2.62	1.19	3,15	0,82
10.	Expiring date	3.00	1.00	2.35	0.71
11.	Mode of use	2.34	1.06	1,98	0.92
12.	NAFDAC number	2.52	1.12	2.58	1.14
13.	Taste	3.16	0.84	2,86	1.10
14.	Durability/Effectiveness of product	2.55	1.15	2,41	0.99
15.	Label	2.69	1.05	3,35	0.88

X<sub>u</sub> = Mean score of urban homemakers  
X<sub>R</sub> = Mean score of rural homemakers  
DF = 698

Table 1 shows that urban homemakers are aware of the 15 consumer information items listed, while the rural homemakers are aware of only 10 items out of 15 consumer information items listed.

### **Research Question 2**

To what extent do urban and rural homemakers in Kogi East Senatorial District of Kogi State utilize consumer information?

**Table 2: Mean Response of Urban and Rural Homemakers on Extent Utilization of Consumer Information**

S/No	Items	Urban		Rural	
		$X_u$	$SD_u$	$X_R$	$SD_R$
1.	Brand name	3.35	0.82	2.82	0.88
2.	Price of goods	2.23	1.07	3.03	1.07
3.	Quantity of goods	3.30	0.90	2.47	0.77
4.	Diet restriction	2.44	0.99	4.75	2.55
5.	Size/quality of goods	2.27	1.04	3.31	0.91
6.	Type of package	2.76	1.02	2.43	1.07
7.	Food appearance	3.05	1.04	2.25	1.00
8.	Composition of food	3.07	0.92	2.20	1.41
9.	Production/Manufacturers date	2.90	1.1	2.5	1.13
10.	Expiring date	3.0	1.1	2.7	1.13
11.	Mode of use	2.80	3.1	2.4	1.11
12.	NAFDAC number	3.60	2.1	3.0	1.09
13.	Taste	2.1	3.0	2.8	1.06
14.	Durability/Effectiveness of product	2.5	1.1	2.2	1.00
15.	Label	2.6	1.0	2.6	1.2

Number of urban homemakers = 354

Number of rural homemakers = 346

$X_u$  = Mean score of urban homemakers

$X_R$  = Mean score of rural homemakers

DF = 698

Table 3 shows that urban homemakers agreed that they utilize 11 out of 15 consumer items listed while the rural respondents on the other hand, agreed that they utilized 9 consumer information items out of 15 listed.

### Research Question 3

What are urban and rural homemakers' sources of consumer information on products purchased?

**Table 3: Mean Response of Urban and Rural Homemakers on their Sources of Consumer Information**

S/No	Items	Urban		Rural	
		$X_u$	$SD_u$	$X_R$	$SD_R$
1.	Magazine/Newspapers	3.17	0.81	1.98	0.82
2.	Radio broadcast	3.68	0.48	3.37	0.80
3.	Television advert	2.92	0.88	2.46	0.72
4.	Friends	1.61	0.77	2.56	0.81
5.	Labels/trademark	1.85	1.36	2.91	1.20
6.	Flyers/handbills	2.55	1.06	2.51	1.15
7.	Posters	2.69	1.05	2.41	0.99

Number of urban homemakers = 354

Number of rural homemakers = 346

$X_u$  = Mean score of urban homemakers

$X_R$  = Mean score of rural homemakers

**Hypotheses**

HO<sub>1</sub>: There is no significance in the mean response of urban and rural homemakers on awareness of consumer information.

Table 4 shows t-test result on the mean responses on extent of awareness of consumer information by homemakers based on their location (place of residence).

**Table 4: Mean Response of Urban and Rural Homemakers on their Awareness of Consumer Information**

S/No	Location	N	Mean X	Df	t-cal	t-crit	Level of significance	Remarks
1.	Urban	354	2.914	698	2.15	1.96	0.05	Significance
2.	Rural	346	82					

Table 4 shows that urban and rural dwellers have mean score awareness of 3.10 and 2.96 respectively. The value oft-calculated of 2.15 is greater than t-critical of 1.96 at 0.05 level of significance. This shows that there is significant difference between urban and rural homemakers on awareness of consumer information. The table reveals that urban homemakers are aware of consumer information more than their rural counterparts. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. This implies that at 0.05 levels of significances there is significant difference between the mean responses of urban and rural homemakers on their awareness of consumer information.

HO<sub>2</sub>: There is no significant difference in the mean response of urban and rural homemakers on their extent of utilization of consumer information.

To test the above hypothesis, t-test was used to compute homemakers' response on the extent of their utilization of consumer information based on their location (place of residence).

**Table 5: Mean Response of Urban and Rural Homemakers on Utilization of Consumer Information.**

S/No	Location	N	Mean X	Df	t-cal	t-critical	Level of significance	Remarks
1.	Urban	354	2.80	698	1.04	1.96	0.05	Not significant
2.	Rural	346	2.91					

The result of the above stated hypothesis is presented in table 5. The mean responses of urban homemakers is 2.80, while that of rural homemakers is 2.91 The value of t-calculated is 1.04 and t-critical is 1.96 at 0.05 level of significance. This shows that there is no significance difference. This implies that at 0.05 level of significance, there is no significant difference between the mean responses of urban and rural homemakers on their extent of utilization of Consumer Information, Thus, the null hypothesis is therefore accepted.

**Hypothesis 3: (Sources of Consumer Information)**

Hoe: There is no significant difference in the mean response of urban and rural homemakers on their sources of consumer information.

In order to test the above hypothesis, t-test was used to compute their responses on their sources of consumer information.

*Awareness and Utilization of Consumer Information by Homemakers in Kogi East Senatorial District of Kogi State: Counselling Implication*

**Table 6: Mean Response of Urban and Rural Homemakers on their Source of Consumer Information**

S/No	Location	N	Mean X	Df	t-cal	t-critical	Level of significance	Remarks
1.	Urban	354	2.63	698	2.30	1.96	0.05	significant
2.	Rural	346	2.6					

The result of the test above stated hypothesis is presented in table 6. The mean response of urban homemakers is 2.63, while that of rural homemakers is 2.6. The value of calculated of 2.30 is greater than t-critical of 1.96 at 0.05 level of significance. Since the (-calculated value is greater than the t-critical value, the null hypothesis is thus rejected. This implies that at 0.05 level of significance there is significant difference between the mean responses of urban homemakers and rural homemakers on their source of consumer information.

**Summary of Findings**

1. There is a significant difference between the mean responses of urban and rural homemakers on their awareness of consumer information
2. There is no significant difference between the mean responses of urban and rural homemakers on their extent of utilization of consumer information
3. There is a significant difference between the mean responses of urban homemakers and rural homemakers on their source of consumer information.

**Discussion**

The study reveals that both urban and rural homemakers are aware of brand name; price of goods, quality of goods, size/quantity of goods, type of package, composition of food, NAFDAC No. and manufacturing date. This finding is in line with that made by Brenda (1996), which revealed that consumers were aware of brand name, price of goods and quality of goods and as a result used them as an indicator of quality.

There is a significant difference in the awareness level of consumer information between urban and rural homemakers. Similarly, a group of researchers, Verma, Toker Cassie (1997) tested consumer's knowledge of best concept found out that urban homemakers had significantly higher scores of knowledge than the rural homemakers on beef, quality, nutritive value and direction for preparation. The significant difference between the mean awareness of urban and rural homemakers he noted, could be attributed to the fact that urban dwelling homemakers are in cities where there are television, posters and other sources of consumer information unlike rural homemakers.

The study further revealed that education has influence on the extent of homemakers' utilization of consumer information, the higher the level of education the greater the mean score. These findings agree with that of Day (1991) who reported that there was observable difference in the awareness and utilization of consumer information between the educated and non-educated homemakers on product purchased. The difference could be as a result of inability to understand the information by the non-educated homemakers.

The study revealed that urban homemakers utilize information on brand name, price of goods, quality of goods and nutrients while rural homemakers utilize information brand name, price of goods, size/quantity of goods and type of package and diet restriction. This is in contrast with the opinion expressed by Osuala (1998) who opined that even if consumers (homemakers) possessed complete knowledge quantity, price and quality of goods and service, it was unlikely that they would act upon the knowledge in their purchasing practices.

Further, the study revealed that there is significant difference in the mean utilization level of consumer information between urban and rural homemakers. Darley and Johnson (1999) carried a cross-national comparison of consumer attitudes towards consumerism in four developing countries and found that educated homemakers utilize consumer information more than non-educated homemakers.

Homemakers in Kogi East Senatorial District of Kogi State encountered some problems in their awareness and utilization of consumer information as revealed by the study. The urban homemakers encountered such problems as provision of scanty information by manufacturers, actual content not indicated and poor communication network through communication agent.

However, these problems are not peculiar with homemakers in Kogi East Senatorial District of Kogi State. Similar research was carried out by Aneke (1995) which revealed that 75% of the respondents used for the study complained about scanty information and also that the product if actually weighed showed a different weight from the one labeled by the manufacturer.

Aneke's study further revealed other problems such as misleading advertisement by manufacturers and also false information on prices. This is because the product so advertised sells higher in the market than the manufacturers' price information during advertisement.

In view of inadequate utilization of consumer information, the study revealed many ways through which consumer information could be enhanced. For instance, the study suggested the inclusion of consumer information into the curriculum of schools from primary to tertiary level of studies, the establishment of a functional consumer protection unit and also, the provision of consumer information in local languages. Added to this were suggestions to disseminate consumer information through workshops, seminars, adult education forum, women organizations, churches and mosques and through extension services by home economists extension workers.

Based on the findings of this study, the following conclusions were made:

- i. Manufacturers do provide consumer information to some extent to homemakers
- ii. Rural homemakers have information through friends/people who might have used such goods and services. This is an indication that these homemakers are not aware of other important consumer information.

### **Recommendations**

In view of the findings made, the following recommendations have been proffered.

- i. It was noted that mass media is a very effective agent of disseminating information. They should therefore advertise goods in such a meaningful way as not only to encourage consumers/homemakers patronage but to provide adequate information.
- ii. Radio and television adverts should be encouraged to use local language as they plan programmes aimed at informing and educating consumers/homemakers.
- iii. Home Economics extension workers should create more awareness and enhance utilization, adult education forum, workshops and seminars.
- iv. Government should create functional consumer agencies in Nigeria
- v. Experts in specific areas should be encouraged to organize workshops/seminars at both urban and rural levels to enhance awareness and utilization of consumer information by homemakers
- vi. Curriculum planners should include consumer information in educational curriculum from primary to tertiary levels, through this, future homemakers would learn about consumer information.

### **Counselling Implications**

The word "counselling" has acquired a plethora of definitions. However, for the purpose of this paper that of Woolf Managatruyo and Rhys (1987), is adopted which averred that counselling is about helping people to help themselves live their lives more effectively, one of the various services provided for the utilization of the aforementioned in counselling, is the information services. Information is one of the most important influences of an individual's perception.

The quality and quantity of goods and services available to the homemakers therefore, is a function of information available to them.

It is therefore, expedient for the homemakers to explore, verify, collect and collate information regarding goods and services for the home so that they can get the best for their money and equally live more effectively.



**References**

- Akagwu, R. (1997). Wants and better buying techniques. *Journal of Technical Education*. 7 (5) Kogi State College of Education, Ankpa.
- Amech, I. (2004). *Consumer education on a necessary tool for economic development and national stability in Nigeria*. Unpublished paper at the 3rd National Conference and Exhibition, School of Vocational and Technical Education, Kogi State College of Education, Ankpa.
- Aneke, M. (1995). *Consumer information awareness and utilization by homemakers in Enugu State*. Unpublished M.ED Thesis, Department of Vocational and Teacher Education, University of Nigeria Nsukka.
- Anyakoha, E. (1999). *Home management for schools and colleges*. Onitsha: Africana -FEP Publisher Ltd.
- Day, G. (1991). Full disclosure of comparative performance information to consumers: provisions and prospects. *Journal of Contemporary Business*, Vol. 4 No. 7.
- Darley, W. F. & Johnson D. (1999). Cross national comparison of consumer attitudes towards consumism in four Developing Countries. *The Journal of Consumer Affairs*, 4 (6).
- Osuala, E. (1998). *Fundamentals of Nigeria marketing* Uruwulu Obosi: Pacific publishers Nigeria.
- Sasse, C. (1997). *Families today* .New York: McGraw - Hill Companies Inc.
- Ukpete, B. (1993). *Fundamentals of consumer education*. Benin City: Judos.
- Verna, S. Tucker, D and Cassie J, (1997). Testing consumer for knowledge of beef concepts. *Journal of Home Economics*, 5 (4).
- Wyllie, J. (1998). *Fundamental of Marketing*. New York: McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc.
- Woolf, J., Manga Truys and Rhy, F (1987). *Counseling*. New York: McGraw - Hill Company.