

Consumer Education as Means of Overcoming Consumer Challenges in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State, Nigeria

Uju E. Nnubia¹, Blessing A. Wagbara^{2*}

¹Department of Home Science, Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike, Abia State, Nigeria

²Department of Home Economics, Hospitality and Tourism, Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Rumuolumeni, Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria

***Correspondence:** Blessing A. Wagbara, Department of Home Economics, Hospitality and Tourism, Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Rumuolumeni, Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria (E-mail: blessywagbara@gmail.com)

Abstract: This study investigated consumer education as a means of overcoming consumer challenges in the Obio/Akpor Local Government Area. The study used a survey research design. The population for this study comprised all the homemakers residing in Obio/Akpor. A systematic random sampling technique was used to obtain a representative sample of the 240 respondents used for the study. A structured questionnaire was used as the instrument for data collection. Two hundred and forty (240) copies of the questionnaire were administered to respondents, and all the copies were returned. The mean and standard deviation were used to answer all research questions. The major findings include that consumers are faced with numerous challenges and that consumer education will help them become informed consumers so as to make the right choice in acquiring goods and services, and it will also safeguard the consumers against the malpractices of manufacturers and traders. The following recommendations were made based on the results of the findings: Curriculum planners should include consumer education in the school curriculum at all levels, and it should be made one of the core subjects/courses to enable consumers to become aware of consumer issues, Seminars and symposiums should be organized among groups, clubs, associations, organizations, and churches, to enlighten their members on consumer issues.

Keywords: Awareness, Challenges, Consumer, Consumer Education, Goods and services, Homemakers

1. Introduction

In this era of global knowledge explosion, the usefulness of consumer education cannot be overemphasized especially, as consumers are faced with enormous challenges in their choice and usage of goods and services. A consumer is any individual that uses goods, services, and other natural resources as gifts from God to satisfy his or her needs and to promote his or her living standard (Adeyanju & Kolawole, 2019). Gunelius (2010) noted that consumers are individuals or groups whose intention is to buy, make use of the purchased goods and services mainly for personal, social, and household consumption and are not connected to any form of entrepreneurial activity. Consumers are individuals, families, or organizations that purchase goods and services for their own use, meaning that consumers are the end users of products in the distribution chain of goods and services. Nwankwo (2011) also noted that consumers are individuals that purchase and make use of goods, products and services of other people. Olusanya et al. (2007) stated that consumer education is the programme that gives the consumers an understanding of their rights that concerns food purchases. Consumer education is also the knowledge the consumers acquire that makes them to understand their rights, know what to buy, when to buy, where to buy from and how to make use of the products bought and the services. Anyakoha (2015) asserted that, consumer education is the act of having good knowledge, attitude and skills required by an individual in order to understand his or her rights as a consumer, such that he or she can discern or judge consumer information to consume intelligently within his or her available resources. Nwabah (2009) opined that consumer education is a knowledge acquired, that enables the consumers to eliminate waste in consumption, safeguard the consumers from dangerous and inferior goods and services and other unfair selling practices. Hence, consumer education is the acquisition of knowledge and skills that the consumer gets to enable him or her decide whether to buy or accept a particular good or service from sellers and service providers, not minding the amount of pressure being mounted on him or her from different source. In order to protect consumers against malpractices of producers and sellers, government enacted rules and also create consumer protection agencies (CPA) (Keswet et al., 2017). And consumer education was also incorporated into school's curriculum (Makela & Peters, 2004). The reason behind the incorporation of consumer education into various school levels is to make consumers become aware of their rights; tactics of the sellers to exploits them, malpractice by the producers and so on. Despite the efforts made, the challenges of consumers still persist thereby expose them to exploitation.

Nwankwo (2011) enumerated the challenges facing consumers, including unfair sales techniques, misleading and irrelevant advertisement with embedded falsehood, unwarranted pressure to make one buy even what is not of immediate need, unethical sales methods, and selling the wrong products to the buyer with inadequate knowledge and a bidding system. Consumers also face other challenges such as adulteration, which is the practice of using inferior or bad raw materials in the production of goods with the aim of making much gain and thereby exploiting the consumers, and misbranding, which is the act of using wrong labeling containing false information about the manufacturer and the ingredients used in the manufacturing of the products with the view of deceiving the consumers (Olusanya et al., 2007). Furthermore, consumers are also faced with other challenges such as illiteracy or ignorance, lack of information on products and services, faulty products, attractive packaging,

and not having a common union. All these and many more are challenges faced by consumers. Therefore, it became necessary for consumers to be educated early enough and understand the importance of consumer education. Hence, consumer education should be taught in schools at all levels. When the importance/benefits of consumer education are inculcated in the lives of the learners, it will equip the learners with the knowledge of how to handle consumer issues, such as consumer legislation, personal finances, economics, advertising and persuasion, consumption and the environment, global resources, housing, clothing, price and quality. Therefore, consumer education instructors and teachers should make the learners become aware of the influence they are exposed to with regards to lifestyles, consumer habits, values and attitudes (Mimbs-Johnson & Lewish, 2009).

Anyakoha and Eluwa (1999) who enumerated the importance of consumer education, included the assessment of consumer information, which helps them to interpret the information about the goods and services, such as expiry dates, weights, and brand names; it helps the consumers to eliminate waste in consumption; it enables them to obtain the best value for their money; and it also safeguards consumers from dangerous and inferior goods and services. Keswet et al. (2017) also highlighted that consumer education helps to develop in the consumer the ability to decide and select goods and services intelligently; it helps consumers to be alert, well informed, and vigilant against corrupt practices in the market; and it also inculcates in the individual the ability to take suitable action when faced with such consumer issues/challenges. It also makes consumers demand safe, reliable, and good quality products at a reasonable price. Hence, it became pertinent to investigate consumer education as means of overcoming consumer challenges in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of River State, Nigeria.

1.1. Statement of Problem

Consumers' lack of in-depth knowledge of the basic quality of goods and services they consume in Nigeria is adversely affecting them. According to Consumer International (cited in Usman et al., 2015), report on the consumer protection all over the world, confirmed that lack of consumer awareness is more a problem of the developing countries. Despite the effort of the government to reduce these challenges, yet the challenges persist. Hence, it became pertinent to investigate consumer education as a means of overcoming consumer challenges.

1.2. Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study was to investigate the role of consumer education as means of overcoming consumer challenges in Obio/Akpor specifically, the study:

- (a) determined the challenges consumers residing in Obio/Akpor are facing in terms of buying goods and services.
- (b) investigate how the study of consumer education can help in curbing consumer challenges in Obio/Akpor Local Government of Rivers State.

1.3. Research Questions

The following research question guided the study:

- (a) What are the challenges consumers residing in Obio/Akpor are facing in acquiring of goods and services.

- (b) What ways can consumer education serve as means of curbing consumer challenges in Obio/Akpor?

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Design for the Study

Design of the study, the study adopted a survey research design

Page | 387

2.1.1. Ethics Statement

Respondents' informed consent was obtained verbally. The research was approved by the relevant research ethics committee at the researchers' institutions.

2.2. Area of the Study

The study was carried out in Obio/Akpor. Obio/Akpor is a local government located at Rivers East Senatorial District and it consists of 63 communities. It is also one of the largest Local Government in Rivers State. Obio/Akpor is also inhabited by several ethnic groups who converge for greener pastures as a metropolitan local government, where hundred percent (100%) of them are consumers of goods and services

2.3. Population and Sample

The population for this study comprised all male and female homemakers residing in Obio/Akpor urban centers, who are: responsible for buying of goods and services in their homes and were therefore capable of supplying adequate information for the study. The target population for this study was 464, 789 (Nigerian population census, 2006). Sample size of two hundred and forty (240) was used for the study. Purposive sampling technique was carried out in the following communities Choba, Rumuolumeni and Rumuodamuya out of the sixty-three (63) communities in Obio/Akpor Local government Area. A systematic random sampling technique was used to obtain representative sample of 240 respondents. These are 105 male and 135 female who are civil servants.

2.4. Instrument for Data Collection and Study Procedure

Questionnaire was used to obtain information from the respondents. The questionnaire contains 20 items on consumer education as means of curbing consumer challenges. The responses were rated on four-point Likert scale for the research questions. The instrument was validated by three (3) experts of the field before use.

2.5. Data Collection Technique

Two hundred and forty (240) questionnaires were administered by hands to the respondents on working days with the help of three research assistance. All the two hundred and forty (240) copies of the instruments distributed were completely filled and returned. This represents 100% return rate.

2.6. Data Analysis Technique

Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. *Research Question one:* What are the challenges consumers residing in Obio/Akpor are facing in acquiring goods and services?

Table 1: Responses on the goods and services challenges being faced by consumers in Obio/Akpor

S/N	Item statement	Mean	SD	Remark
1.	Lack of adequate information on the goods and services available for consumer's needs.	3.5	1.87	Agree
2.	Inability to make choice as a result of varieties of products in market place.	3.5	1.87	Agree
3.	Problem of identifying genuine products	2.5	1.58	Agree
4.	Inability of the consumers to identify which shop offers quality goods at reasonable price.	1.5	1.22	Disagree
5.	Lack of consumer union	3.5	1.87	Agree
6.	Problem of adulteration	2.5	1.58	Agree
7.	Irrelevant advertisement with embedded falsehood.	1.5	1.22	Disagree
8.	Problem of misbranding (wrong labeling)	1.0	1.00	Disagree
9.	Problems of wrong weight and measure.	2.5	1.22	Agree
10.	Unwarranted pressure of the traders to make you buy even what is not of immediate need to you.	1.0	1.00	Disagree

Page | 388

Table 1 shows that item 1, 2, 3, 5, 6 and 9 with associated mean scores of 3.5, 3.5, 2.5, 3.5, 2.5 and 2.5 respectively were accepted to be the challenges of goods and services that the consumers face in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area. Whereas, item 4, 7, 8 and 10 with the following associated mean scores responses; 1.5, 1.5, 1.0 and 1.0 respectively were not accepted to be among the challenges consumers face in receiving goods and services in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area.

3.2. *Research Question two:* What ways can consumer education serve as means of curbing consumer challenges in Obio/Akpor

Table 2: Responses on ways consumer education can curb consumer challenges

S/N	Item statements	Mean	SD	Remark
1.	Consumer education creates awareness to the consumers for making decision of what to buy, when to buy, where to buy.	3.5	1.87	Agree
2.	It protection consumers against malpractices of the sellers	2.5	1.58	Agree
3.	It enables the consumers to become aware of rules enacted by the government to protect the consumers	3.5	1.87	Agree
4.	It makes them become aware of how to seek redress and where to seek redress from.	3.5	1.87	Agree

5.	It makes the consumers to choose goods and services intelligently.	1.5	1.22	Disagree
6.	It enables the consumers to assess consumer information.	2.5	1.58	Agree
7.	It helps consumers eliminate waste in consumption	1.5	1.22	Disagree
8.	It helps them to obtain the best value for their money.	1.5	1.22	Disagree
9.	It safeguards consumers from dangerous and inferior goods and services.	2.5	1.58	Agree
10.	It develops the skills to act as an informed and responsible consumer.	2.5	1.58	Agree

Table 2 shows that, item 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 9 and 10 with associated mean responses of 3.5, 2.5, 3.5, 3.5, 2.5, 2.5 and 2.5 respectively were accepted to be ways consumers education could help to curb the challenges consumers face in acquiring goods and services in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area. While item 5, 7, and 8 with associated mean responses of 1.5, 1.5, and 1.5 respectively were rejected.

Research question one sought to find out the goods and services challenges being faced by consumers residing in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State. The result in table 1 revealed that, consumers in Obio/Akpor are faced with numerous challenges in acquiring goods and services, such as adulteration, no unionism and lack of adequate information. This is in agreement with the findings of Obeta (2011) who stated that consumers in Umudike community are faced with challenges such as making choice on goods and services, and inappropriate information about goods and services. Also, Olabisi (2003) stated that producers of goods and services advertise their products in exciting ways that could mislead the consumers. Mimbs-Johnson and Lewish (2009) opined that lack of consumer rights awareness is also another issue to the consumers, as they cannot ask for their right because they lack in-depth knowledge of it.

Table 2 revealed that consumer education develops in the consumers the skills to act as an informed and responsible consumer, it makes the consumers become aware of how to seek redress, and it also safeguards consumers from dangerous and inferior goods and services. These findings are in line with the findings of Obeta (2011) who pointed out that consumer education guides the consumers to purchase goods and services intelligently, make them become aware of their rights and also gain information on where to seek redress. Nwabah (2009) also opined that comparing prices from different shops and sellers makes a consumer not to fall victim of the overpricing of the traders. Consumer education provides the consumers with the information they need about goods and services available in the market place so that they can make proper decision of what to buy and where to buy from (Brookins, 2017).

4. Conclusion

The study investigated consumer education as means of overcoming consumer challenges. It found out that consumers are facing numerous challenges in acquiring goods and services. It was also shown that consumer education can help the consumers become an

informed consumer. It makes the consumers become aware of manufacturers and traders' tactics in exploiting them, consumer education generally, when adequately taught to the consumers, it equips them with the knowledge of overcoming consumer challenges to an extent. Curriculum planners should include consumer education in school curriculum at all levels, no matter the course area and it should be one of the core subjects/courses that must be passed in all examination to enable the consumers become aware of consumer issues. Seminars and symposium should be organized amongst groups, clubs, associations, organization, churches, to enlighten their members on consumer issues.

Acknowledgements

None

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

Author Contributions

Conceptualization: UEN & BAW

Data Analysis: UEN & BAW

Funding acquisition: UEN & BAW

Investigation: UEN & BAW

Methodology: UEN & BAW

Writing- Original draft, review & editing: UEN & BAW

Data Availability Statement

The original contributors presented in the study are included in the article. Further enquiries can be directed to the corresponding author.

Funding Information

The authors have no funding to disclose.

References

- Adeyanju, F. B., & Kolawole, A. A. (2019). *Consumer Education* (HED 123). National Open University of Nigeria. Retrieved from <https://www.nou.edu.ng>
- Anyakoha, E. U. (2015). *Home management for schools and colleges*, revised ed. Africana First Publishers.
- Anyakoha, E. U., & Eluwa, M. (1999). *Home Management for Schools and Colleges*. Africana-Feb Publishers.
- Brookins, M. (2019). Why is consumer Education important. Retrieved from <https://bizfluent.com/about-61631>
- Gunelius, S. (2010). The shift from CONsumers to PROsumers. Forbes, 3 July.

- Keswet, Larai A., Agbowuro, Christine Jimwan, Christiana S. Gisilanbe, & Naomi Adamu (2017). Development of Science Education in a Globally Depressed Economy. *International Journal of Innovation and Research in Educational Sciences*, 4, 2349–5219.
- Makela, C. J., & Peters, S. (2004). Consumer education: Creating consumer awareness among adolescents in Botswana. *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, 28, 379-387. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1470-6431.2004.00402.x>
- Mimbs-Johnson, C. A., & Lewis, A. B. (2009). Consumer Economics and Family Resources. Importance of Financial Literacy. *Journal of Family & Consumer Sciences Education*, 27, 1-12.
- Nwabah, N. (2009). *Food and Nutrition for Schools and Colleges*. Mindex Publishing.
- Nwankwo, J. N. (2011). *A practical guide to family financial management*. Eddy-Joe Publishers.
- Obeta, A. O. (2011) Level of consumer education awareness of households in Umudike community. *Journal of Home Economics Research*, 15, 145-153.
- Olabisi, A. A. (2003). *Homemaking Today*. University Press.
- Olusanya, J. O. Bala, F., Eyisi, O. & Olojola, S. O. (2007). *Exam focus: Foods and Nutrition for WASSCE & SSCE*. University Press.
- Usman, D. J., Yaacob, N., & A Rahman, A. (2015). Lack of consumer awareness: A major challenge for electricity consumer protection in Nigeria. *Asian Social Science*, 11, 240-251

Publisher: Department of Home Economics and Hospitality Management Education, University of Nigeria, Nsukka 41001, Nigeria

© 2022 the Author(s), licensee Department of Home Economics and Hospitality Management Education, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Nigeria. This is an open access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0>)