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Sources, Availability and Use of Information for Sustainability of Petty Trade in Ikenne Local Government Area, Ogun State, Nigeria

By Dr. K.I.N. Nwalo, Ezinwanyi Madukoma

University of Ibadan , Ibadan

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Dr. K.I.N. Nwalo ^α, Ezinwanyi Madukoma ^ο

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I. INTRODUCTION

Information is an indispensable instrument of planning, decision-making and control especially in all spheres of life including businesses. The smooth running of any business or market oriented economy is based on availability, accessibility and use of timely, reliable

, complete and efficient information. More and Stele (1991) viewed information as an ingredient of social change because the degree for sustainability of the nation's economy is subject to the accurate and appropriate information readily made available to the populace. Harande (2009) noted that the development of countries globally cannot be achieved without the development of the rural community. Hence this cannot be possible without access to prompt and relevant information to the petty traders in this rural areas.

In Nigeria at present, the provision of information to the rural populace is not to be reckoned with. Information is needed to be able to understand what is going on in our environment, to acquire basic needs of life, as well as to react properly in every situation. Information sources availability and use is a very critical factor to the sustainability of national development. To meet consumer demands, many businesses now require critical information system in order to be successful (Martin, 2003). The availability of these critical information resources has assumed importance even in petty trade for sustainability of national development. The achievement of this largely depends on the availability and use of this information by the petty traders.

Objectives of the study

This study seeks to determine:

1. The information sources available to petty traders in Ikenne Local Government
2. The major information sources utilized by petty traders in the Local Government.
3. The information sources preferred by the petty traders in the Local Government.
4. The perceived effect of information use on petty traders in Ikenne Local Government Area.

II. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What information sources are available to petty traders in Ikenne Local Government?
2. What major information sources do the petty traders in Ikenne Local Government utilize?
3. What information sources do petty traders in Ikenne Local Government prefer?
4. What are the perceived effects of information use on petty traders in Ikenne Local Government?

Author ^α : Department of Library, Archival and Information Studies University of Ibadan, Ibadan

Author ^ο : Babcock University Library, Ilesan-Remo, Ogun State.

E-mail : Ezimadu1@yahoo.com

Statement of the problem

The primary concern of any business organization today is profit making. Every business organization is also concerned with the sustainability of gains made over time. Business men, individuals and organizations seek information that will be of critical benefit to the fulfillment of their objectives and goals. It is observed that petty trade in the rural areas of Nigeria has not been given attention as to their growth and sustainability which is achievable through the availability and use of information at their disposal. Perhaps, this is because the traders are largely illiterate and so can hardly appreciate the need for and use of information for greater success in their business. It is in the light of this that this study is undertaken to know how far the petty traders use information for business, the sources of their information and the effect of information availability and use on sustainability of petty trade in Ikenne Local Government, Ogun State.

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

a) Information

Information is something that reduces uncertainty in decision-making Aiyepoku (1992). Buckland (1991) defines it as a process which occurs in the mind when a problem is united with data that can help solve it. Ojedokun (2007) submitted that information is the meaning assigned to data within some context for the use of that data. According to Popoola (2008), information is part of a process of converting messages received into knowledge. The survival of petty trade in Ikenne local government even in all spheres of human life depends largely on the availability and use of information. Information can be characterized by manner /mod of presentation, content and originality and proximity to the source or origin.

As a manner of presentation – when words are spoken not written, it is referred to as oral information. It can be delivered face-to-face, on in form of radio/TV programmes, audio and video presentations. However, when words are in print or written, it is referred to as textual information and can be delivered in the form of books, reports, etc. Other manners of presentation include; graphics such as pictures, diagrams, charts, maps and atlases and numeric, which is data in form of number, example, collection of statistics.

Information by content – statement of things done, known to have occurred or to be true or existing, is regarded as facts. Examples are dictionaries, atlases, handbooks, directories, etc.

Originality and proximity to the source or origin – This can be classified in three forms: primary, secondary and tertiary form of information. Information in its original form such as raw data or statistics that have been collected but not yet analyzed or first reports of research studies or eye witness account of events is

referred to as “primary information”. Primary information includes diaries, letters, newspapers, articles reported from records, speeches, surveys, etc. It is actual evidence presented without any analysis or interpretation (University of Tennessee Libraries, 2005). When information is removed in some way from its original form and repackaged, it is referred to as “secondary information”. According to the University of Tennessee Libraries (2005), Secondary information source is a literature that analyzes, interprets, relates or evaluates a primary source or other primary sources. It includes textbooks, encyclopedias, dictionaries, any book or article which is an interpretation of events, or of primary sources. Tertiary information according to Oyedokun (2007) are sources which provide information for an overall feel of the subject or initial stages of searching but provide little substance to support academic statements. Examples of tertiary information sources include dictionaries, encyclopedias, indexing and abstracting tools used to locate primary and secondary sources, etc, all these may also be secondary sources.

b) Information Sources

Uhegbu (2007) identified four (4) sources of information as:

- Individual (Oral)
- Corporate Bodies (Institutional sources)
- Printed Materials
- Libraries and Information Centers.

Individual (Oral Media): Individuals are well known as custodians of information and constitute what information scientists and librarians regard as primary sources. Before the use of paper and later technologies, individual via their oral tradition were the chief source of information. Individual sources include information emanating from parents, relatives, friends and even strangers. This source is largely free of charge and often comes unsolicited.

Corporate Bodies (Institutional Sources): This is another veritable source of information. Corporate bodies include companies, industries, banks and other financial institutions, universities and other educational or research institutions, churches and non-governmental organizations (NGOS). A lot of information is generated in the course of carrying out their normal functions. Written rules and regulations, internal memoranda, sermons constitute sources of information. Uhegbu (2007) believes that corporate bodies as sources of information have the advantage of disseminating mostly authentic and factual information. The degree of reliability of information from this source is much higher compared to individual sources because information is not released to the public until it is properly authenticated.

Printed Materials: Some of the well-known sources of information are books and other published

materials. Other published materials include: journals, newsletters, newspapers and magazines. The amount of time and care taken to prepare and proofread these materials before publication make them more reliable.

Libraries and Information Centres: Many citizens of Nigeria cannot afford to buy books, journals or newspapers and magazines due to economic difficulties. In order to ensure that information recorded in books and other published materials are made available to these people, the library performs the duty of acquiring, organizing, packaging and making these materials available to them.

c) *Information Use*

The use of information is dependent on the need for that information. It must be recognized that an information need exists, and the need defined. Information is an imperishable wealth. According to Haliso and Okwilagwe (2003), it is an asset that everyone should acquire. The level of information consciousness depends on individual perception and need. The information available to users also determines their use. The need and uses would normally be defined based on, but not limited to, when such terms and conditions are not convenient or attainable, the users may decide not to use the information. Choo, (1995), opined that information use is a dynamic, interactive social process of inquiry that may result in the making of meaning or the making of decisions, the inquiry cycles between consideration of parts and the whole, and between practical details and general assumptions. Participants clarify and challenge each other's representations and beliefs. Choices may be made by personal intuition, political advocacy, as well as by rational analysis. He further expatiated that managers as information users, for example, work in an environment that has been described as information overloaded, socially constrained, and politically laden. As new information is received and as the manager reflects and acts on the problem situation, the perception of the situation changes, giving rise to new uncertainties. The problem situation is redefined, the manager seeks new information, and the cycle iterates until the problem is considered resolved in the manager's mind. So, information is an essential ingredient in all spheres of life.

Choo (2001) observed that organizations develop their own culture of information seeking and use, establishing values and norms about, for example, how accurate the data should be, how much search is necessary, what kind of editing and manipulation is permissible and so on. We may refer to those aspects of an organization's values, norms, and practice that influence the seeking, evaluation and use of information as information culture (Choo 2006). Thus, development can only be effective if rural dwellers have access to the relevant, diverse information for their activities. Efforts

must be made to give access to knowledge and information by non-literates who constitute the majority of rural dwellers (Alegbeleye and Aina, 1985). As noted by Okiy (2003:1), "rural development is a basis for economic development and information is an important ingredient in development process. People in rural areas whether literate or not should have access to any kind of information which will help them to become capable and productive in their social and political obligations, to become better informed citizens generally". In the same vein, Diso (1994:143) is of the opinion that information must as a matter of policy, be seen as a basic resource for development if durable structure are to be provided for effective access and utilization, which entails information capturing, coordination, processing, and dissemination. However, Harande (2009) asserted that the information received by the rural dwellers is either not reliable or distorted in the process of transmission. According to him, this unhealthy situation constitutes a major impediment, which keeps the rural communities in Nigeria and other developing countries far away from development indicators as effective information service in the rural community enhances development.

d) *Information Availability*

Availability is about information being accessible as needed when needed, where needed. The objective of availability is to enable access to authorized information or resources. Lipson and Fisher (1999) states that the problems of greatest concern today relates to the availability of information and continuity of services. The problem of information availability and use extends beyond the logical and physical domains. Petty traders assumably are depending upon the availability of information to successfully execute business. According to Etebu (2009), information dissemination and accessibility have reduced the world to a global village. Africa, like the rest of the world, is experiencing change in all aspects of life: from basic cultural values to technology, which has changed not only the mode of communication, but the concept of time. To make information useful in development, it is important to take a closer look at information seeking behavior of rural people who are used to oral tradition. Meyer (2003) noted in his study of a group of traditional farmers producing food for their consumption, that incoming information was better understood and accepted when the messages were communicated in a way which they could identify with.

Etebu (2009), quoting Alegbeleye (1998) expatiated that it is clear from available research and from the experience of library professionals that:

- Rural communities have information needs that are not satisfied by existing library services
- Information needs differ from one locality to another depending on existing socio-economic and political

conditions

- Information must be directly relevant to the lives of the people if it is to be used
- Information transfer must simulate existing indigenous mode of communicating information.

Harande (2009) hold the view that information is raw material for development for both urban and rural dwellers. Prosperity, progress, and development of a nation depend upon the nation's ability to acquire, produce, access and use pertinent information. According to him, access to information and advice is a key resource for local people in maintaining active and independent lives. Information is the lifeblood of any society and vital to the activities of both the government and private sectors. Quoting Bell (1979), the dependence upon information to create innovation and change, places a high premium on the ability of (developing countries) nations to access and use information to create advances in society. The development of countries globally cannot be achieved without the development of the rural communities. This is because according to him, 75 – 80 percent of the people in developing countries live in the rural areas and need positive, relevant and prompt attention in their daily activities. Development can only be effective if rural dwellers have access to the relevant, diverse information for their activities. Rural development is a basis for economic development and information is an important ingredient in development process. Petty traders, whether literate or not should have access to any kind of information which will help them to become capable and productive in their business and to become better informed citizens generally. Harande (2009) further noted that the use of information by rural communities determines their level of awareness, progress, and success in life and success of rural development programmes depends on effective use of information in daily activities. This view is applicable to petty traders in rural communities.

Cooperative actions should be taken to ensure the availability of information and use for sustainability of petty trade.

e) *Information Use and Sustainability of Petty Trade*

Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary defined trade as "the business of buying and selling, to engage in the exchange, purchases, or sale of goods". Therefore, petty trade is the buying and selling of goods or services in a small scale. It also defined sustainability as "of, relating to, or being a method of harvesting or using a resource so that the resource is not depleted or permanently damaged". Sustainability as the development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. This concept of sustainability encompasses ideas, aspirations and values that continue to inspire individual, public and private organizations to become better stewards of the

environment and promote positive economic growth and social objective (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency).

The lives of individuals and families depend to a certain extent on the quality of information at their disposal and the purpose for which it is used. Accessibility to appropriate information is equally important for its use on daily activities. According to Aboyade (1987), information is very important in strengthening the link and achieving the integration of various social groups so they can develop together as a cohesive and well organized community. The author further stressed that one of the more pervading characteristics of underdeveloped countries is the heterogeneity (diverse constituents) of conditions found in them. Many of them remain under-developed because they have not been able to integrate effectively a sufficient mass population to achieve the type of change-generating interaction needed to move the social system to new and desirable heights. In order to reduce the high degree of heterogeneity, there must be constant flow of information availability and use at the disposal of the people to cover such processes of national integration. It is this recognized capacity of information availability, accessibility and use that facilitates and brings about significant structural changes within country that makes it so vital in the development process, of which integrated rural development is an important aspect.

Popoola (1998) observed that the growing importance of information to the operation of economic activity and the flexibility offered by the use of information and communication technologies had led many researchers to comment on actual or potential integration of economy on a global scale. To achieve sustainability in petty trade, there should be emphasis on the flow of information and use in every dimension. Information should flow down from the very top policy makers to the grass root level, and vice versa, upward from the masses to the policy makers to facilitate continuous interaction. The different groups involved in the development process such as policy makers, project managers and staff, change agents and the rural people themselves will need to have information about each other so they do not work at cross purposes. They also require adequate information about their own particular assignment or objects of focus. Aboyade (1987) states that farmers need to have information on specific supplies required on their farm. They need to know where, when and how to obtain fertilizer, pesticides, seeds, mechanical equipment and other farm inputs through purchase or lease. They will need to know prices, the names of suppliers in their areas and how to satisfy other conditions for obtaining them. They will also require information on the sustainability of different types of their products. These conditions are very applicable to petty traders who require information on different goods or product they are dealing on, how

to raise capital and increase their market: how to attract customers; where, when, and how to make maximum profit; and method of advertising their market as well as being able to sustain their trade. Therefore, it calls for availability and use of information to be able to achieve these objectives.

VI. METHODOLOGY

Descriptive survey research was adopted in the study. The population is made up of petty traders in Ikenne Local Government, Ogun State Nigeria, estimated to be about 500. The sample size for the study was 300 which are 60% of the estimated population. The stratified random sampling technique was used in selecting the 300 participants in the study.

Research data was collected with a structured questionnaire which was distributed and collected by the researchers. Out of 300 copies of the questionnaire distributed to the respondents, 280 (93.3%) copies were dully completed and returned. Descriptive statistics involving frequency count and percentages was employed to analyze the data.

V. FINDINGS

The main objective of this study is to establish the sources, availability and use of information by petty traders in Ikenne Local Government Area, Ogun State Nigeria. Precisely, a total of 300 questionnaire were administered to the respondents, 280 copies of the questionnaire were dully completed and returned representing 93.3% of the respondents.

Table 1: Showing the distribution of the respondents by sex

Sex	Frequency	Percentage
Male	85	30.4
Female	195	69.6
Total	180	100.0

Majority of the respondents were female 195(69.6%)

Table 2: Indicating distribution of respondents by marital status.

Marital Status	Frequency	Percentage
Married	170	60.7
Single	110	39.3
Total	180	100.0

There were more married 170(60.7%) than single respondents 110(39.3%).

Table 3: Showing the age distribution of the respondents.

Age	Frequency	Percentage
20 – 30years	60	21.4
31 – 40years	63	22.5
41 – 50years	70	25
51 – 60years	45	16.1
60years and above	42	15
Total	180	100.0

Table 3 indicates that the majority of the respondents were between the ages of 41 – 50years, followed by ages 31 – 40years, and 20 – 30 years.

Table 4: Distribution of respondents by qualification

Qualification	Frequency	Percentage.
SSCE, WAEC, GCE, NECO	142	50.7
OND, HND, NCE, Diploma	88	31.4
Degree	28	10.0
Primary School Living Cert.	22	7.9
Total	280	100.0

Notes: **WEAC:** West African Examination Council; **GCE:** General Certificate of Education; **NECO:** National Examination Council; **SSCE:** Senior School Certificate Examination; **OND:** Ordinary National Diploma; **HND:** Higher National Diploma; **NCE:** National Certificate of Education and First School Living Certificate.

Majority of the respondents were **SSCE, WAEC, GCE, NECO** 142(50.7%) and **OND, HND, NCE,** and **NECO** holders 88(31.4%).

Research Question 1: What Information Sources are Available to Petty Traders in Ikenne Local Government?

Table 5: Showing the Information Sources Available to the respondents

Information Sources	Very Readily Available	Occasionally Available	Readily Available	Not Available
Reports	72(25.7%)	48(17.1%)	60(21.4%)	100(35.7%)
Voucher	52(18.6%)	56(20%)	82(29.3)	90(32.1%)
Minutes of meetings	72(25.7%)	124(44.3%)	60(21.4%)	24(8.6%)
Newspapers	58(20.7%)	56(20%)	78(27.9%)	88(31.4%)
Policy Papers	86(30.7%)	122(43.6%)	50(17.9%)	22(7.8%)
Television	55(19.6%)	63(22.5%)	82(29.3%)	80(28.6%)
Radio	90(32.1%)	82(29.3%)	80(28.6%)	28(10%)

Magazines	34(12.1%)	49(17.5%)	62(22.1%)	135(48.3%)
Market Association	146(52.1%)	93(33.3%)	21(7.5%)	20(7.1%)

Information sources very readily available to the respondents were market association 146(52.1%), radio 90(32.1%) and policy papers 86(30.7%).

Research Question 2: What Information Sources Do Petty Traders in Ikenne Local Government Area Utilized?

Table 6: Presenting information sources utilized by the respondents

Information Sources Used	Very Highly Utilized	Highly Utilized	Utilized	Not Utilized
Reports	50(17.9%)	44(15.7%)	46(16.4%)	140(50%)
Voucher	50(17.7%)	45(16.0%)	50(17.9%)	135(48.2%)
Minutes of meetings	148(52.9%)	32(11.4%)	58(20.7%)	42(15%)
Newspapers	37(13.2%)	93(33.2%)	70(25%)	80(28.6%)
Policy Papers	64(22.9%)	90(32.1%)	92(32.9%)	34(12.1%)
Television	51(18.2%)	89(31.8%)	46(16.4%)	94(33.6%)
Radio	64(22.9%)	70(25%)	79(28.2%)	67(23.9%)
Magazines	84(30%)	66(23.6%)	87(31.0%)	43(15.4%)
Market Association	130(46.4%)	68(24.3%)	45(16.1%)	37(13.2%)

The above table shows that information sources highly utilized by the respondents were minutes of meetings 148(52.9%) , market association 130(46.4%), and magazines 84(30%).

Research Question 3: What are Information Sources Preferred by the Respondents?

Table 7: Presenting information sources preferred by the respondents

Information Sources Preferred	Highly Preferred	Preferred	Not Preferred	Undecided
Reports 68(24.3%)	52(18.5%)	129(46.1%)	31(11.1%)	
Voucher 50(17.8%)	74(26.4%)	119(42.5%)	37(13.3%)	
Minutes of meetings	87(31.1%)	76(27.1%)	72(25.7%)	45(16.1%)
Newspapers	64(22.9%)	66(23.6%)	123(43.9%)	27(9.6%)
Policy Papers	70(25%)	105(37.5%)	78(27.9%)	27(9.6%)
Television	56(20%)	102(36.4%)	83(29.6%)	39(13.9%)
Radio	82(29.3%)	72(25.7%)	87(31.1%)	39(13.9%)
Magazines	83(29.6%)	76(27.1%)	67(23.9%)	54(19.3%)
Market Association	131(46.8%)	84(30%)	40(14.3%)	25(8.9%)

The respondents highly preferred market association information 131(46.8%) to minutes of meetings of various association 87(31.1%), and radio and magazines 82(29.3%) in that order.

Research Question 4: What are the Perceived Effect of Information Use on Petty Traders in Ikenne Local Government Area?

Table 8: Showing the Perceived Effect of Information Use on the Respondents

Variables	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Information use has made my trade to grow.	115(41.1%)	104(37.1%)	13(11.1%)	30(10.7%)
It assists in increasing my profit.	135(48.2%)	82(29.3%)	33(11.8%)	30(10.7%)
It assists in obtaining loan to support my business.	98(35%)	100(35.7%)	49(17.5%)	33(11.8%)
It helps me to attract more customers.	91(32.5%)	98(35%)	47(16.8%)	44(15.7%)

It assists me to organize my daily business activities.	92(32.9%)	79(28.2%)	61(21.8%)	48(17.1%)
It helps me to avoid giving credits to customers.	94(33.6%)	93(33.2%)	46(16.4%)	47(16.8%)
Information has helped me to make more savings.	115(41.1%)	32(11.4%)	82(29.3%)	51(18.2%)
Information helps me in solving critical business problems.	104(37.1%)	69(24.6%)	52(18.6%)	55(19.6%)
It helps me in taking critical decisions.	106(37.9%)	69(24.6%)	45(16.1%)	60(21.4%)

The perceived effect of information use on the respondents as indicated in table viii, shows that they strongly agree that information use assists in increasing their profit 135(48.2%); it helps their trade to grow and help them to make more savings 115(41.1%); it also helps them in taking critical decisions 106(37.9%) and solving critical business problems 104(37.9%).

VI. DISCUSSION ON FINDINGS

It is obvious as revealed in this study that petty traders lack access to proper and adequate information as the study shows that information sources available, utilized and preferred by the respondents were market association information, minutes of various meetings and radio. As the implication of this is that sustainability of petty trade and development in rural areas will not be achieved. As observed by Alegbeleye and Aina (1985) that development can only be achieved if rural dwellers have access to the relevant, diverse information for their activities. Also Okiy (2003) who noted that rural development is a basis for economic development and information is important ingredient in development process. People in rural areas whether literate or not should have access to any kind of information which will help them to become capable and productive in their social and political obligations to become better informed citizens. Etebu 's (2009) viewed in his statement that to make information useful in development, it is important to take a closer look at information seeking behavior of rural people used to oral tradition. Also Meyer (2003) observed that incoming information was better understood and accepted when the messages were communicated in a way which they could identify. To this end, sustainability of petty trade cannot be achieved without access and utilization of information.

VII. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The availability and utilization of information sources is a very important issue which should be given undivided attention for development and sustainability of the nation especially in the rural areas. It offers great opportunities to improve the quality of petty trade.

The main sources of information available, preferred and utilized by the petty traders in Ikenne Local Government of Ogun State, Nigeria were market association, minutes of various meetings and radio. There is, therefore, the need to sensitize the traders of

the importance of making effective use of other information sources for the development of their trade. Public libraries and information centers, for example, have potentials for meeting the traders' information needs once they are patronized. To achieve this, information outreach, seminars and workshops in Yoruba, the native languages, display of posters that will encourage information use, as this will go a long way to assist in the development and sustainability of petty trade for national development.

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