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ANALYSIS OF CONSUMER ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE PURCHASE OF STREET FOODS IN ABA SOUTH AREA OF ABIA STATE NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT
The study delved into consumers' attitude towards the purchase of street foods in Aba South Area of Abia State, Nigeria. Data were collected from 150 respondents using the multistage sampling technique and analysed with the probit regression model. The result of socioeconomic profile of respondents showed that majority (88.00%) of the street foods consumers were males, young with an average age of 46.78 years and single (58.00%). The result further showed an average household size of 4.87 persons, highly educated (97.50%) and an average monthly income of ₦44607.50 . The probit model posted a pseudo R^2 of (0.6731). Among the variables tested age, gender, occupation, price and quality of street foods significantly affected consumers' attitude. The study advocated scaling up of consumer education.
Keywords: Attitude, Consumers, Street Foods, Purchase

INTRODUCTION

Urbanization which is taking place rapidly in developing countries has made street foods business an increasingly important income generating strategy as well as fast and economical meal option (Levin *et al*,1999: Stevano *et al* 2019) This urbanization process has led to the development of informal food supply which includes the street food sector which now constitutes significantly to public health as well as risks for urban dwellers (Tomlins, 2002). According to FAO (2007), Street foods are an extremely heterogeneous food category, which includes meals, drinks, and snacks. There is a variation in terms of ingredients, methods of retail, processing and consumption and are sold on the street from "pushcarts or baskets or balance poles, or from stalls or shops having fewer than four permanent walls. (Nzeka, 2011) stated that Nigeria had a history of developed supermarket industry until the early 1980s when the social and economic changes diminished the country's middle class significantly, since then, most Nigerians shop at traditional open-air markets or purchase their goods from traders and street vendors. Factors that led to the proliferation of street-vending of foods in Nigeria, as in most other countries, include: deterioration of rural living conditions, migration to the cities, long commuting distances between the workplaces and homes, unemployment, lack of cooking skills, changes in family cohesion and a shortage or absence of establishments that serve reasonably priced food close to the workplaces (Tinker 1997, :Maxwell, 2000;). The benefits of street food trade extend throughout the local communities and economies since vendors buy their fresh food locally, thus linking their enterprises directly with local farms (WHO, 2006). About 2.5billion people all over the world eat street foods every day (FAO, 2007: Sualeh and Zakir 2020: Beniwal and Mogra 2023). This is obvious as every city in Nigeria has a wide variety of foods sold along the streets including the high ways. These range from ready - to – eat meals, snacks, beverages, to fruits, vegetables including local delicacies. Street-vended foods provide a major source of income for a large

number of persons, particularly women; a chance for self-employment and the opportunity to develop business skills with low capital investment; least expensive and most accessible means of obtaining a nutritionally balanced meal outside the home for many low income earners (WHO, 2002; Dipeolu *et al*., 2007). Sreet vending is an integral component of urban economies around the world and has become a common phenomenon in most of the developing countries. It has existed for hundreds of years and is considered as a cornerstone of many cities' historical and cultural heritage (Skinner, 2011).

Sadly, despite the tremendous potential to improve both nutrition and food security among urban population, street foods can sometimes cause concern because of their potential to cause serious food poisoning outbreaks due to microbiological contamination, improper use of additives and the presence of other adulterants and environmental contaminants (FAO, 1995). Some of the street food stalls are dirty and located in dirty environments with groups of flies taking over available spaces, while others are found near sources of contamination such as sawmills and carpentry sites; refuse dumps, and along dusty roads. Street foods displayed on open yards can easily be contaminated by dust, exhaust smoke, insects, hands of intending buyers and climatic elements. (Dipeolu, *et al.* 2007)

Furthermore, most of these street food vendors, are unlicensed and untrained in food hygiene or sanitation, work in unsanitary conditions and these are predisposing factors for food poisoning and serious health problems (Johnson and Yawson, 2000). This is because the safety and shelf life of the street foods depend upon the interaction of chemicals, physical and microbial factors (Falola *et al*., 2011).

In Abia state, especially the metropolitan areas Aba South inclusive, sale and consumption of street food is a common sight. Due to dearth of information in consumer attitude towards the purchase of street foods in the study area, the study sought to:

(i) describe the socio-economic characteristics of street food consumers.

(ii) analyse the determinants of consumers' attitude towards the purchase street food

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METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in Aba south LGA of Abia State, Nigeria. Aba south is located in the South East geopolitical zone of Nigeria. It is headquartered in the city of Aba. it has a projected population of about 559,900 persons (NPC, 2016). It has a tropical climate with two seasons, the rainy season and dry season. It's one of the major commercial cities in Abia state with a very high business activities going on daily basis. This informed the choice of the area for the study. The sample size includes all street food consumers in the study area.

Multi-stage sampling technique was used to obtain the samples for this study. In the first stage, five (5) communities were randomly selected, in the second stage, one (1) village was randomly selected from each of the five (5) communities making a total of five villages. Finally, from each of the villages, 30 consumers of street food were randomly selected making a total of 150 respondents used for the study. Both descriptive and inferential statistics (probit regression model) were employed in data analysis.

Analytical Construct

Probit Model

According to Abonazel *et al*.(2023), a probit model is one used in building a relationship between the binary dependent variable and one or more explanatory variables. It is also statistical probability model with two categories in the dependent variable . Its analysis is based on a cumulative normal probability distribution. The dependent variable, y, takes on the values of zero and one (Aldrich and Nelson,1984 and Liao, 1994: Uzunoz and Akcay 2012). The probit model analysis provides statistically significant findings of which demographics increase or decrease the probability of consumption. In this study, the decision to consume street foods was taken as one (1), while the decision not to consume zero (0).Factors affecting consumer attitudes and acceptance of a product may include attributes of the product, price, consumers' socioeconomic characteristics and interaction between them (Uzunoz and Akcay, 2012). Here, the factors considered include age, gender, occupation, size of household, price of foods,

quality of foods, place of purchase, income, marital status and education. The model as employed by Uzunoz and Akcay (2012) in a similar study is expressed as follows ;

$$P(Y = 1/x) = F(XB) = 1/\sqrt{2\pi} \int_{-\infty}^{XB} e - \frac{(XB)^2}{2} dx \quad \ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots (1)$$

Where $X = (1, X_1i, X_{2i} \ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots X_ki$

$B' = (\beta_0, \beta_{1,} \ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots \beta_k)$

Y = Vector of dependent variable (Consumer choice of street food (1 = Yes: 0 = No)

X = Vector of explanatory variables (predicators)

$\propto$ = probit coefficients

e_i = random error term

The explanatory variables included in the model are:

X_1= Age (years)

X_2= House hold Size (Number)

X_3= Gender (Dummy: Male=1, female = 0)

X_4= Income (₦)

X_5=Educational level (Years)

X_6 = Marital status dummy (married = 1, single = 0)

X_7 = Occupation (working = 1, not working = 0)

X_8 = Place of Purchase of Street food (far = 1, close = 0)

X_9 = Price of street food (₦)

X_{10} = Street food Quality (Dummy: High = 1; Low = 0)

ei = Error term

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The table 1 shows that 88.00% of the respondents were male while 12.00% were female. This implies that males were more engaged in the purchase of street foods than the females indicating the responsibility of women in preparing household food. The result disagreed with the findings of Rogerio *et al*. (2018) who submitted that females get involved in a lot of street foods consumption. Most studies in different regions suggest that females have positive attitudes and are more likely to purchase street foods especially organic food than males (Lea and Worsley, 2005; Krystallis *et al*., 2008; Onyango *et al*., 2007), though some have found gender (Suki, 2013; Manuchehr, 2016) not impacting purchase.

It is evident from the Table1 that 31.50% of the respondents in the study area were between the ages of 41 and 50 years while 41.33% of them were within the age range of 50-59 years. The mean age of the respondents was 46.78years. This suggests that majority (77.00%) of the consumers were in their middle ages (between 20 and 50 years). Age is an important determinant of street foods purchase as consumption patterns generally follow the body conformation (Leshi and Leshi, 2017). The Table reveals that fairly good proportion (58.00%) of the respondents were single while 35.33% of them were married. The marital status of an individual is one of the important indicators in the purchase of street foods as single people are more likely to purchase street foods because of its convenience. (Leshi and Leshi, 2017).

According to the table, 53.33% of the respondents had secondary school education, while only 21.33% of them had tertiary school education. Cumulatively, 97.50% of the respondents had one form of formal education or the other. This means that there is a strong relationship between literacy level of the respondents and purchase of street foods. Literate consumers will purchase more of organic foods than junks. This aligned with Anyiro *et al*. (2013) who observed that educational level affected consumers' purchase, consumption patterns, perception and preference. Information through education is an important attribute for the purchase of any product and that applies street to foods as well (Vietoris *et al*., 2016; Thogersen *et al*., 2010).

The distribution of the respondents according to household size reveals that 78.67% of the respondents in the study area had household sizes of between 4 and 6 persons while 12.00% others had household sizes of between 1 and 3 persons. The mean household size of the respondents was 4.87 persons. The number of persons in a household could decrease the purchase of street foods especially when they are not economically active (aged and children) (Kim *et al*., 2013).

The Table 1 shows that 33.33% of the consumers had monthly income of between ₦41,000.00 and ₦50,000.00 while 30.67% of

them earned income of between ₦51,000.00 and ₦60,000.00 per month. The mean monthly income of the consumers was ₦44,607.50.
The result shows that the respondents in the study area are low income earners and so could consume street food as a way of meeting their nutritional needs given its affordability. Income remains an important decision-making factor owing to its premium pricing, especially in the developing world. Codjia (2012), in a study on urban food consumption in developing countries reported that people with low income rely almost exclusively on food supplied by vendors.

The socioeconomic characteristics of street foods consumers in the study area are shown in table1.

Table 1: Socioeconomic Characteristics of Respondents in the Study Area.

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	132	88
Female	18	12
Total	150	100
Age (Years)		
21 – 29	17	11.33
30 – 39	5	3.33
40 – 49	58	38.67
50 – 59	62	41.33
60 and above	8	5.33
Total	150	100
Mean (years)	46.78	
Marital Status		
Single	87	58.00
Married	53	35.33
Separated	3	2.00
Widowed	7	4.67
Total	150	100
Educational level		
No Formal Education	10	6.67
Primary Education	28	18.67
Secondary Education	80	53.33
Tertiary Education	32	21.33
Total	150	100
Family size		
1-3	18	12.00
4-6	118	78.67
7 and above	14	9.33
Total	150	100
Mean	4.87	
Monthly Income (₦)	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
< 30,000	17	11.33
31,000-40,000	15	10.00
41,000-50,000	50	33.33
51,000 – 60,000	46	30.67
61,000-70,000	12	8.00
>70,000	10	6.67
Total	150	100.0
Mean (₦)		

Source: Field Survey, 2022.

Factors affecting consumers' attitude towards the Purchase of Street Foods in Aba South Area of Abia State

The probit model estimates of factors affecting consumers' attitude towards street foods purchase is shown in Table 2. The model posted a log likelihood value of -60.0918, a pseudo R^2 value of 0.6731 and a goodness of fit chi-square value of 19.04 which is statistically significant at 1.0% level.

Specifically, the coefficient of gender (0.0950) was positive and statistically significant at 5.0% alpha level. This implies that males were more engaged in the purchase of street food indicating that women prepare most of the food they consume. Females are more careful about their diet due to self image,and physical appearance. This result agreed with the findings of Ahmed and Krisha (2007), who submitted that males get involved in the purchase and consumption of street food because of their exposure to series of out-door extra-curricular activities.

The coefficient (-0.0290) of age is negative and statistically significant at 1.0% alpha level. This suggests that age is an important determinant of consumer attitude towards the purchase of street foods because quality, quantity and consumption patterns of an individual generally follows the body conformation. Younger men and women have the probability to purchase street foods than the old. This result is in line with *a priori* expectation and agrees with the result of Regmi (2002) who asserted that the elderly class prefer consumption of homemade food probably due to health reasons. Also, FAO (2006) opined that the older a consumer becomes, the less his preference, consumption and willingness to purchase street foods occasioned by health consideration. There is a decline in the purchase of street foods as age increases because people in this category exercise a lot of caution in choosing what they consume bearing in mind the associated health risks.

Table 2: Probit Regression Estimates of Factors Affecting Consumers' Attitude towards the Purchase of Street Food

Variables	Estimated coefficients	Standard errors	Z-ratios	P> IzI
Constant	-1.8219*	1.6517	-1.66	0.096
Age	-0.0290**	0.0143	-2.53	0.011
Marital Status	-0.0072	0.0145	-0.06	0.950
Gender	0.0950**	0.2949	2.15	0.032
Level of Education	-0.0200	0.1858	-0.50	0.618
Monthly Income	0.0557	0.0432	1.13	0.235
Occupation	0.0399**	0.0532	2.35	0.019
Place of purchase of street food	-0.1553	0.1843	-0.12	0.908
Household Size	-0.0119	0.0172	1.33	0.211
Price of street food	-0.0018***	0.0294	-2.71	0.007
Street food quality	0.0344***	0.2054	2.65	0.008
Log likelihood	-60.0918			
LR Chi^2	19.04			
Mc Fadden's Pseudo R^2	0.6731			

***Source**: Field Survey, 2022.*

***, **, * Significant at 1.0%, 5.0% and 10.0% levels respectively.

The coefficient (-0.0018) of price of street foods was negative and statistically significant at 1.0% alpha level. This implies that price of street foods had inverse relationship with consumers' attitude towards the purchase street foods. An increase in the price of street foods result to a decrease in the probability of purchase. Price is an attribute that influences the choice of patronizing an item, this agrees with Radder and Roux (2005) who observed that price can be influential when a consumer makes purchase decisions. According to Baek, Ham, Yang, (2006) and Mill (2007) consumers alleged price to be the most relevant factor in the choice of a restaurant and food to purchase.

The coefficient (0.0344) of quality of street foods was positive and statistically significant at 1.0% alpha level. Food quality according to Thilde (2006) include social, nutritional, hygiene, aesthetic and functional. Food quality is one of the most critical components consumers consider in the purchase

of street food, the higher the quality of vended foods, the higher the level of patronage. According to Namkung and Jang, (2007), Sulek and Hensley (2004), Clark and Wood (1999) and Susskind and Chan (2000) food quality is a primary factor influencing customer patronage of a food vendor and purchase of street food. Mattila (2001) also considered food quality as a key predictor of customer loyalty in casual dining restaurants.

Finally, coefficient (0.0399) of occupation was significant at 5% alpha level. This was expected as one's job or occupation affects the availability of time for meal preparation which invariably increases street foods consumption. This agrees with the findings of De wolf (2017) that most females are employed now than in the past. He stated that in the US, about 75% of mothers are in the labour force with more unmarried mothers more likely to work. This scenario has left adults with less time to prepare food. Shaharudin *et.al* (2011) found out that most working people have too little time at home hence their increase in demand for fast foods to fit into their life style. This result also corroborates that of Islam and Ullah (2010) who observed that with increase in economic activities, individuals have less time to prepare food at home. However, Osei Mensah, *et al* (2013) disagrees with the result.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Given the hustle and bustle that characterizes our present society, street food consumption has come to stay. These foods are consumed as breakfast, lunch, dinner or snacks by adults and children alike. In analysing consumer attitude towards the purchase of street foods in Aba South Area of Abia State, age, gender, occupation, price and quality of street food were concluded to be the significant factors that affected street food purchase and consumption. In the light of the foregoing, Policies that will integrate safety approaches to go through the entire street food chain should be made to improve food quality and reduce associated risks. Consumer education should be scaled up.

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