ASSESSMENT OF THE INFORMATION NEEDS OF STREET FOOD VENDORS IN ILORIN EAST LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF KWARA STATE, NIGERIA

Banjoko I.K[3], *Ifabiyi J.O[1], Ahmed S.A[3], Lawal S.W[3], Ajadi I.M[3] and Opeyemi G[2]

[1]Department of Agricultural Extension and Rural Development, University of Ilorin, Nigeria.
[2]Department of Agricultural Economics and Farm Management, University of Ilorin, Nigeria,
[3]Department of Agricultural Technology, Kwara State Polytechnic, Ilorin, Nigeria.
**Corresponding author mail: oluwole4love@yahoo.com*

Abstract

This study focused on the assessment of information needs of street food vendors in Ilorin east local government area of Kwara State, Nigeria. Eighty street food vendors were randomly selected for this study. Data were obtained using a structured questionnaire to elicit information on respondents' socioeconomics characteristics, their sources of information, level of knowledge on food hygiene and safety practices, perceived information needs, Occupational and Health Risks of food vendors and the constraints affecting the street food vendors in the study area. Result reveals that the mean age of the respondents were 30.24 years, their average income was ₦ 21,225. The result reveals that respondents had high level of knowledge on pre-vending medical examination with mean score of 1.66, use of hand gloves (1.64) and blowing air into polythene bag before serving is not a good practice (1.59), food packaging methods (1.64) was the highest ranked perceived information needs. High cost of input (2.0) was the highest ranked constraint. The result reveals that there is a significant relationship between the income of respondents and their information needs (r = -0.340, p=0.002). The study recommends the provision of information on hygienic food handling, processing methods and good sanitation practices to the street food vendors and there should be formation of groups among street vendors for easier access and dissemination of information.

Key words: Street food, Vendor, Knowledge, Information Needs

Introduction

Foods are substances that supply nutrients to the body and help sustain life. Street foods are ready to eat foods or drinks sold by hawkers or vendors from stands or stalls on the street or other public places such as markets, along the high ways, bus-stops, Stadium and around religious centres such as the churches and mosques. It is also sold from portable food booth, food carts or food truck. Street foods are foods meant for immediate consumption.

Adequate nutrition are basic requirements for physical and economic development, since an underfed person is an under productive workforce. FAO (2007) reported that 2.5 billion people eat street food every day. This may be due to the fact that street foods are cheaper and can be easily accessed on the average than restaurant foods.

Food safety entails appropriate handling, preparation and storage of foods in manner that prevent the consumers from chemical or microbial contamination. Every food value chain actors which starts from the farmers, processors, vendors, and up to the final consumers should ensure food safety. The street food vendors needs to be monitored carefully so as to ensure best practices during food preparation and to guarantee food safety. In recognition of the importance of food safety as a key factor for achieving high level of health for

all Nigerians, the government launched the national policy on food hygiene and safety in the year 2000 as an integral part of the Nigerian national health policy. The policy seeks to achieve high level of food hygiene and safety practices which will promote good health, control food-borne diseases, minimize and finally eliminate the risk of diseases related to poor food hygiene and safety in Nigeria. Food safety monitoring and regulatory agencies in Nigeria are federal ministry of health, national agency for food and drug administration and control, standard organization of Nigeria, all the states and local government ministries of health and agriculture, the federal ministry of agriculture and rural development.

Street food vendor is a person that sells food on the street. Street food hawking or vending is increasing as it has become an important source of livelihood for many families as both children and adults are involved in street food vending. Street foods could be classified into drinks, fruits, vegetables, fried and roost foods, cooked and uncooked raw foods such as meat, fish etc.

Information is crucial to the success of any business. Street food vendors needs a lots of information to be successful. Inadequate information may pose a potential threat to the safety of food and its suitability for consumption. Ariyo (1991) opines that information assists in reducing the degree of uncertainty and ignorance in the operating environment. Information need is an individual or group desire to locate and obtain information to satisfy a conscious or unconscious need. Information need is the lack of appropriate information on which to base choices that could lead to benefits or services that may improve people's well-being (Tester, 1992). Information need is also described as the feeling of lacking something and wishing to fill the gap. All activities of human beings always generate need for information about the tasks they performed. However in Nigeria, Ozowa (1995) reported that there was seldom feel of the impact of innovations either due to lack of access or poor dissemination of such vital information.

Food pose a major health and safety risk if not properly handled, processed, stored and consumed. The street food vendors largely do not meet proper hygienic standards and can therefore lead to morbidity and mortality due to food borne illnesses (FAO, 2003). The number of reported outbreaks of food-borne illnesses has been high in developing countries (Osaili et al, 2013) of which Nigeria is one of them. This may be due to poor and unhygienic food preparation practices among street food vendors. In Nigeria, street food vendors are not usually contacted by food regulatory agencies, public health personnel's and agricultural extension agents. Little information is known about street foods vendors in Nigeria, there is relatively no study carried out on information needs of street food vendors in Kwara State, Nigeria. Therefore there is a need to assess the information needs of the street food vendors in Ilorin east local government area of Kwara state, Nigeria.

The specific Objectives were to;

1. ascertain the socio-economic characteristics of street food vendors in the study area.
2. identify the sources of information of the respondents.
3. determine the respondents' level of knowledge on food hygiene and safety practices.
4. identify the respondents' perceived information needs.
5. assess the Occupational and Health Risks of the respondents.
6. determine the constraints affecting the respondents.

Hypotheses:

These null hypotheses were tested

Ho_1: there is no significant relationship between some selected socioeconomic characteristics of the respondents and their information needs.

Ho_2 : there is no significant relationship between the information needs and the level of knowledge.

Methodology

The study was carried out in Ilorin east local Government area of Kwara state. Majority of the people in the local government area are farmers.

The population for the study consist of eighty food street vendors which were randomly selected from four rural communities in Ilorin east local government area of Kwara state. The communities are Oke-oyi, Oke- ose, Agbede and Lajolo.

To determine the source of information of the respondents, a scale of Yes and No were used where Yes = 2 and No = 1. To measure the level of knowledge on food hygiene and safety practices, the Yes and No scale were used where Yes = 2 and No = 1. Any knowledge item that is below 1.5 is low knowledge level while high knowledge level is above 1.5, (the knowledge level is calculated by adding 2+1=3/2=1.5). To determine the perceived information needs of the respondents, a 3-point likert type scale were used where highly needed = 3, moderately needed = 2 and not needed = 1. To measure the constraints affecting street food vendors, a 3-point likert type scale were used where always =3, rarely = 2 and never = 1.

Descriptive statistics such as frequency counts, percentage and means were used to analyse the finding of the study. Inferential statistics used to test the hypotheses was Pearson product moment correlation (PPMC).

Results and Discussion

The re**s**ult in table 1 reveals that 22.5% were male while 77.5% were female. This is in contrary to the findings of Monney, Agyei and owusu (2013) who reported that all the street food vendors in Konongo were females. The average age of the respondents was 30.24 years. The majority 78.8% of the respondents were single while 17.5% were married. 38.8% had primary education while 20% no formal and secondary education respectively. Majority 75% were Muslims while 25% were Christians. 33.8 % vend cooked foods while 28.8 vend uncooked food and roast/fried foods respectively. The average income of the respondents was ₦ 21,225. Chukuezi, (2010) reporting the findings of FAO on food hygiene, said street food vendors are required to undergo basic training in food hygiene before licensing and further training as required by the relevant authority. However, more than half 55% had no formal food training prior street food vending activities while 45% had formal training.

Table 1: Respondents' socioeconomic characteristics

Variables	Frequency	Percentage	Mean Score
Gender			
Male	18	22.5	
Female	62	77.5	
Age			**30.24 years**
≤ 20	23	28.8	
21- 40	36	45.0	
≥41	21	26.3	
Total	80	100.0	
Marital status			
Single	68	78.8	
Married	14	17.5	
Separated	1	1.3	

Widowed	1	1.3	
Divorced	1	1.3	
Total	80	100.0	
Educational level			
No formal Education	16	20	
Primary	31	38.8	
Secondary	16	20	
Tertiary	17	21.3	
Total	80	100.0	
Religious affiliate			
Christianity	20	25	
Islam	60	75	
Total	80	100.0	
Type of food vend			
cooked food	27	33.8	
Uncooked food	23	28.8	
fried/roasted food	23	28.8	
fruits/vegetables	7	8.8	
Total	70	100.0	
Income			**₦21,225**
≤ 10,000	21	26.3	
11000-20,000	31	38.8	
21,000-30,000	16	20	
31,000- 40,000	6	7.5	
≥ 41,000	6	7.5	
Total	80	100.0	
Any Formal training before vending food			
Yes	36	45	
No	44	55	
Total	80	100	

The result in table 2 reveals that agricultural extension with the mean score of 1.91 was ranked first and indicating that it is the most important source of information. The mean of the second, third and fourth important source of information was Nutritionist (1.78), Newspaper/ magazines (1.53) and Health and Sanitation officers (1.18).

Table 2: The Sources of information of the respondents

Source of information	Yes (2)	No (1)	Mean Score	Rank
1. Extension agents	91.3	8.8	1.91	**1**
2. Radio/ Television	16.3	83.8	1.16	**5**
3. Cooperative society	16.3	83.8	1.16	**5**
4. Family members	5.0	95.0	1.02	**8**
5. Mobile/Cell phone	15.0	83.8	1.15	**7**
6. Newspaper/ magazines	52.5	47.5	1.53	**3**
7. Nutritionist	78.8	21.3	1.78	**2**
8.Health and Sanitation officers	17.5	82.5	1.18	**4**

The result in Table 3 reveals that respondents had high level of knowledge on Pre-vending medical examination (1.66), use of hand gloves (1.66) and knowledge of blowing air into polythene bag before serving as a bad practice (1.59) while respondents had low level of knowledge on Periodic medical examination/check- up (1.5), Provide soap / detergents for consumers to wash their hand (1.45), Awareness of laws on food hygiene and safety (1.36), Don't sell/vend food when sick (1.29), Treat and cover wounds before serving and Protection of food from all form of contamination (1.18), Wear protective clothing and head covering (1.16) and Wash hand after toilet (1.09). This result is in similar with findings of FAO/WHO (1997), Chukuezi, (2010) and Monney et al, (2013). There is need for training of street food vendors on the areas where there were low knowledge level.

Table 3: Level of knowledge on food hygiene and safety practices

Knowledge level	Yes %	No %	Mean Score	Rank
1. Protection of food from all form of contamination	17.5	82.5	1.18*	9
2. Pre-vending medical examination	67.5	32.6	1.66**	1
3. Wear protective clothing and head covering	16.3	83.8	1.16*	11
4. Provides wash hand basin for cleaning	33.8	66.3	1.34*	7
5. Periodic medical examination/check- up	18.8	81.3	1.5*	4
6. Provide soap / detergents for consumers to wash their hand	42.5	57.5	1.43*	5
7. Wash hand after toilet	8.8	91.3	1.09*	13
8. Blowing air into polythene bag before serving is a bad practice	58.8	41.3	1.59**	3
9. Awareness of laws on food hygiene and safety	36.3	63.8	1.36*	6
10. Don't sell contaminated and unsafe food	11.3	88.8	1.13*	12
11. Treat and cover wounds before serving	17.5	82.5	1.18*	9
12. Don't sell/vend food when sick	27.6	72.5	1.29*	8
13. Use hand gloves	23.8	76.3	1.64**	2

** High knowledge level ≥ 1.5 is High, * low knowledge level ≤ 1.5

The result in table 4 reveals that food packaging methods (1.64) was the highest ranked information needs, the second ranked information needs was Food preservation /storage methods (1.55), Information on customer care service (1.51), modern food

processing methods and food labeling /branding (1.5), diseases and pest management (1.49) and Environmental/ sanitation practices information (1.44). This implies that street food vendors has gaps they desired to be filled through provision of information on the identified areas of their occupation. The result is in agreement with Devadason (1996) who posited that information need represents gaps in the current knowledge of the client.

Table 4: Perceived information needs of the respondents

Area of Information needs	Highly Needed freq (%)	Moderately Needed freq (%)	Not Needed freq(%)	Mean Score	Rank
1. Food packaging methods	-	51 (63.8)	29 (36.3)	1.64	1
2. Market information	4 (5.0)	16 (20.0)	60 (75.0)	1.3	9
3. Environmental/sanitation practices information	10 (12.5)	15(18.8)	54(68.8)	1.44	7
4. Business registration information	4 (5.0)	8 (10.0)	68(85.0)	1.2	11
5. Modern food processing methods	15(18.8)	10 (12.5)	54 (68.8)	1.5	4
6. Food labeling/branding	11 (13.8)	18 (22.5)	55 (63.8)	1.5	4
7. Diseases and pest management	11 (13.8)	17 (21.3)	52 (65.0)	1.49	6
8. Street food vending bye-law/regulations	4 (5.1)	10 (12.5)	66 (82.5)	1.20	11
9. Food preservation/storage method	13 (16.3)	18 (22.5)	49 (61.3)	1.55	2
10. Loan/ financial help	2 (2.5)	13 (16.3)	65 (81.3)	1.21	10
11. Recordkeeping	8 (10.0)	14 (17.5)	58 (72.5)	1.38	8
12. Information on customer care services	15 (18.8)	11 (13.8)	54(67.5)	1.51	3

The result in table 5 reveals that sexual harassment with mean score of 2.2 was the highest ranked occupational risks of street food vendors. Other occupational health risks of food vendors are musculoskeletal pain (2.0), back pain (1.8). Sexual harassment may be due to the fact that majority of the street food vendors were females and were young.

Table 5 : Occupational and Health Risks of food vendor

Risks	Mean Score	Rank
1. Malaria	1.46	4
2. Musculoskeletal pain	2.0	2
3. Back pain	1.8	3
4. Sexual harassment	2.2	1
5. Sun bite	1.35	5

The result in table 6 reveals that high cost of basics vending inputs (2.0) was the highest ranked constraint. Lack of modern facilities (Cold room/refrigerators/warehouse) (1.93), Communication/language barrier (1.86), theft (1.85), Lack of credit (1.81), Illiteracy (1.81), Inadequate food marketing skills (1.74) and High tax charges (1.61).

Table 6: The constraints affecting street food vendors

The constraints	Always freq.(%)	Rarely freq. (%)	Never freq.(%)	Mean Score	Rank
1. Lack of readily available market	12 (15.0)	15 (18.8)	53 (66.3)	1.49	12
2. Inadequate food marketing skills	13 (16.3)	33 (41.3)	34 (42.5)	1.74	7
3. Illiteracy	16 (20.0)	33 (41.3)	31 (38.8)	1.81	6
4. Lack of credit	18 (22.5)	31 (38.8)	31 (38.8)	1.84	5
5. Communication/language barrier.	12 (15.0)	45 (56.3)	23 (28.8)	1.86	3
6. High tax charges	10(12.5)	29 (36.3)	41 (51.3)	1.61	9
7. high cost of renting selling location	11 (13.8)	22 (27.5)	47 (58.8)	1.55	11
8. Lack of extension personnel.	14 (17.5)	18 (23.8)	47 (58.8)	1.59	10
9. Lack of modern facilities (Cold room / refrigerators/warehouse)	29 (36.3)	16 (20.0)	35 (43.8)	1.93	2
10. Health risks/ hazards	24 (30.0)	11 (13.8)	45 (56.3)	1.74	7
11. High cost of basics vending inputs	19 (23.8)	42 (52.5)	19 (23.8)	2.0	1
12. Theft	16 (20.0)	36 (45.0)	28 (35.0)	1.85	4

The result on table 7 below reveals that there is a negative significant relationship between income of the respondents and their information needs (**r = -0.340; p=0.002**) significant at **0.01 %,** there is no significant relationship between information needs and gender, age, marital status and educational status. This implies that the information needs of the respondents decreases as their income increases. The null hypothesis that there is no significant relationship between some selected socioeconomic characteristics of the respondents and their information needs is therefore rejected.

Table 7: Correlation between some selected socioeconomic characteristics and their information needs

Variable	r value	p value	Decision
Gender	-0.028	0.803	Not significant
Age	0.042	0.709	Not significant
Marital status	0.087	0.444	Not Significant
Education level	0.182	0.106	Not significant
Income	-0.340*	0.002	Significant

* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

The result in table 8 reveals that there is no significant relationship between the information needs and the level of knowledge of the respondents (r = -0.515; p=0.086). This implies that their level of knowledge does not determine the information needs of the respondents. This result is in agreement with the findings of Monney, et al, (2013) who reported that there is no significant relationship between training of street food vendors and their knowledge level.

Table 8: Correlation between the information needs and the level of knowledge of the respondents

Variable	r value	p value	Decision
level of knowledge	-0.052	0.865	Not significant

Conclusion

The result reveals that 22.5% were male while 77.5% were female. The average age of the respondents was 30.24 years. Majority 78.8% of the respondents were single while 17.5% were married. 38.8% had primary education while 20% no formal and secondary education respectively. The result shows high cost of inputs was the highest ranked constraints. The result reveals that there was a significant relationship between income of the respondents and their information needs.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were suggested;

1. There should be the provision of information on hygienic food handling, processing and storage to the street food vendors.
2. Government agencies on food and health safety should always make contact with street food vendors so as to ensure adherence to hygienic food handling, processing and good sanitation practices.
3. There should be formation of street food vending groups for easy contact and dissemination of information by the food safety regulatory agencies and agricultural extension agents.

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