

## Information Seeking-Pattern of Nigerian Textile Market Women and Strategies for Improvement

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### Abstract

The study investigated the information seeking-pattern of Nigerian textile market women and strategies for improvement of which the study was an ex-post-facto type and adopted survey research design. Disproportional stratified random technique was used to select markets for the study while questionnaire was used to collect data to elicit information from 1556 respondents and data were analyzed with the aid of frequency counts, percentages, mean and standard deviation. Findings revealed that majority of textile market women in Nigeria had information needs and these needs were adequately recognised by them. Also, they often seek information about their businesses and other life related issues. Gender bias, culture, lack of adequate skills, attitude and lack of awareness are the major challenges facing textile market women in Nigeria. Adequate training for textile market women and making information relating to their experiences public are largely major strategies that can be used to improve the information seeking behaviour of these women.

**Keywords:** Information seeking behaviour, information needs, information, textile market women.

### Introduction

Information is an important resource which has contributed to the improvement of most professions, people and nations. Tahir, Mahood & Shafique (2008) posit that people are living in information era as this information has become the most important element of progress in society. One of the cardinal groups of people which require information to survive are traders. Information has the potential for helping traders make sound decisions in their businesses. \when these set of people are enlightened with appropriate information needed to perform businesses effectively, they are bound to excel. When information is readily available in the environment it enhances the cumulative and individual knowledge of traders, thereby making the market then informed and rational, (Yue, Chatuyendi & Meththa, 2004).

Information seeking behavior, according to Igwe (2012) is an individual way or manner of gathering and sourcing for information for personal use, knowledge updating and development. Wilson (2000) posits information seeking behaviour as that which individual personally reason for seeking information, the kind of information which are being sought, ways and sources with which needed information is being sought. Information seeking behaviour is expressed in various media available in libraries and more currently electronic media. Case (2002) sees information seeking as an important part of human

being, and that it is something that we do on a regular basis. What is common to all the above listed and cited definitions is the facts that information seeking refers to actions that people take in order to obtain needed information.

The assessment of information need and seeking behaviour of various groups and individuals is essential for assisting them to access and use information resources for optimal performance and productivity (Oyewo, 2006). Individual information need varies; as a result the approach to studying information needs also varies considerably. Diversity in people's account for how they seek information with information explosion and overload witnessed recently gave birth to the concept of studying the information seeking behavior of different groups of users. In view of the aforementioned, this study will focus on Nigerian textile market women and their pattern of information seeking with a view to suggesting strategies for improvement. There have been quite a number of studies that have focused on women; however, there has been relatively very little empirical research from a library and information science perspective on needs and seeking behavior of textile market women in Nigeria.

### **Historical Development of Textile Industry**

Textile industry is one of the largest informal sectors that women are prominent and spans the globe. This sector has taken care of many people who are not fitted into the formal employments due to inadequate job opportunities and also is a source of livelihood for many, especially women. Women are critical to the achievement of sustainable economic development in any region, even in these times of economic and financial crisis, it is noted that women continue to contribute to global growth and recovery (Sing & Belwal, 2008).

From the accounts of Ratnakar and Yumiko (no date) textile and clothing is a unique industry in the global economy in which most developed countries of today and newly industrialized countries used as the springboard for their developmental journey and even some least developed countries were able to step onto the development ladder on the basis of their textile and clothing industries. It has a very low entry barrier, entry does not require huge capital outlay and factors can be set up with workers with relatively low skills and most protected industry in global economy. The earlier view is equally expressed by researchers such as Sivasankaran (2013), Arndt (2013), Atkin (2009), Heath and Mubarak (2012), Jensen (2012), and Munshi and Rosenzweig (2006).

Historically, textile and clothing industry has played a critical role in national development by the World Trade Organization (2006), the industry generated \$479 billion in world export and accounted for a 46% share in global merchandise exports. Yusuff (2013) succinctly expressed that Yoruba female textile traders in Nigeria have broken the 'glass ceiling' and have made a success of their textile trading. Data further reveal that parents, family/kingships members and friends had great influence in the strategic entry of women into textile trading in Balogun Market in Lagos State and the subsequent development of women's entrepreneurial activities and concluded that Yoruba female textile trading were motivated into textile trading because of economic and cultural values attached to the trade. Women's contribution to economic development remains significant as they have joined the workforce in greater numbers and it has been argued that such exposure has led to improved outcome for women. Access to such opportunities has encouraged women to invest in human capital in which the ability and capability of women has been harnessed fully without any form of discrimination. Evidence of these are shown in term

of wealth, literacy, socialization, exposure in all key economic sectors which have primarily regarded women as resources to be mobilized for national development of nations.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The specific objectives of the study are to: Determine information needs of Nigerian textile market women;

1. Find out the information seeking behaviour of Nigerian textile market women;
2. Find out challenges facing Nigerian textile market women when seeking information;
3. Determine possible strategies for improving Nigerian textile market women's information behaviour.

### **Literature Review**

Warner and Procaccino (2004) posited that women tend to be the primary seeker of information for their children and other family members as well as for themselves. Camble (1996) investigated the use of and access to information by rural women in Borno State and concluded that rural women relied mostly on informal sources of information in their search for information. The dependence of these rural women on informal sources is majorly due to the absence or unavailability of formal sources in the rural community. Where such formal sources of information are available, they are ineffective. Moreover, Borgers (1999) identified three factors that generally determine the information-seeking behaviour of women. These factors include:

- (a) The characteristics and perceptions of women;
- (b) Certain characteristics of women's colleagues and comparison; and
- (c) The characteristics of the organization and situation.

Studies on information and small business by (Duncombe & Heeks 1999; Moyi 2003; Njoku 2003; and Duncombe 2004) showed the main sources of information for enterprises are other business owners, family members or friends. The degree of friendship and relationship influences whether a business person approaches a specific individual to obtain information (Triana et al, 1984). Mchombu (2000) also observed the trend among small-scale business women in Botswana and found out that women in that region obtained their business information through informal channels and a large number of women operators are not aware of formal information resources and sources.

Njoku's (2004) study revealed that principal sources of information for small-scale fishermen include colleagues, friends, neighbours and relatives. Dincombe (2004) observed that business owners prefer information generated by informal sources because it tends to be handy, it is more trusted, and it is applicable to their existing knowledge base, which was derived from sources that exhibit similar outlooks and aspirations to that of the recipient. By and large, small businesses build external networks that become important sources of information for many business inputs.

Similarly, Greve & Salaf (2003) maintained that informal networks (relatives and friends) provide inputs like advice and finance. Relatives are also sources of initial capital for many small enterprises. Hence, the nature of information sources, the nature of the information itself and the qualitative assessment of the usefulness of information from particular sources are likely to be important factors which relate to usage of these sources, depending on information need (Fuelhart & Glasmeier, 2003).

The problem of low level of awareness of their information needs by market women makes them unaware of where to look for information. Ikoja-Odongo (2001) observed that the Small Medium Enterprises Scheme (SMES) and market women sector largely relies on other people in order to meet their information needs. Experts such as Uhegbu, (2003), Etim, (2000) and Ugah and Okpara (2007) identified different challenges that affect information accessibility and utilization to be lack of awareness, inaccessibility, environment, poor infrastructure, cost for users, illiteracy, ignorance, and lack of information among others.

Singh & Belwal (2008) discovered that lack of entrepreneurial and management competence and expertise, problems in finding markets and distribution networks, limited opportunities for promotions and participation, limited amount of government and institutional support, absence of technical know-how and integration mechanism and rampant corruption were listed as problems area and developmental issues attached to women entrepreneurship in small medium enterprises in Ethiopia. Mordi et al (2010) study was based on the role of cultural values in understanding the challenges confronted by female traders and entrepreneurs in Nigeria

### **Methodology**

The research design adopted for this study is the descriptive survey of ex-post facto type because it is best tool for obtaining facts about a person, belief, attitude, motivation, and behaviour and the fact that no variable were manipulated. The population for this study comprised all the 13,404 registered textile market women spread across the various textile markets located in Southwestern and Southeastern geopolitical zones of Nigeria (National Bureau of Statistics, 2007).

Multi-stage sampling technique was employed in selecting the sample for the study. At the first stage of the sampling procedure, the stratified sampling technique was used to categorize markets in the states across the selected geopolitical zones into textile market and general market. The category of "textile markets" referred to are the major markets where textiles are the major goods being sold, while "general markets" referred to markets where textile esmaterials are among major goods being sold. The purposive sampling technique was used in selecting the biggest markets from both the textile markets and general markets in which the markets were stratified into. In selecting the respondents for the study, the random sampling technique was used to select 20% of the registered textile markets women in the selected markets. Thus, a sample size of 1,600 textile markets women were selected for the study. This was done in accordance with previous research which holds that if a population is in many hundreds, one needs a sample size of 20% (Nwana, 1989). Also Denga (1989) cited in Edem (2005) avers that there is no single rule that can be applied to cases regarding the size of a sample.

The questionnaire was used as the main instrument of data collection. The questionnaire was trial-tested on textile market women in Alade Market, Ikeja, Lagos State which were not part of the main study. The returned copies of questionnaire were subjected to analysis and the results gave a reliability coefficient (Cronbach Alpha) 0.71 which was considered adequate for this study. Copies of the questionnaire were distributed to textile market women in various selected markets under study. This was done by the researcher in conjunction with trained research assistants who were familiar with the terrain. Data were gathered over a period of 10 weeks.

**Data Analysis and Interpretation**

Out of the 1,600 (100%) copies of questionnaire administered, 1,578 (97.79) were filled and returned while 12 copies were not properly filled and were discarded, thereby leaving the researcher with 1,566

copies of the questionnaire for analysis. The descriptive method of data analysis, including frequency counts, percentages, mean, standard deviation, and inferential statistics, were used to present data.

**The Specific Information Needs of Nigerian Textile Market Women****Table 1: Identification of Information Needs by the Textile Market Women in Nigeria**

Information areas	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Rank
Market related information	1,555	99.3	1 <sup>st</sup>
Goods related information	1,553	99.2	2 <sup>nd</sup>
Information on other business	1,498	95.7	3 <sup>rd</sup>
Information on scholarship for children	1,474	94.1	4 <sup>th</sup>
Information on politics and political parties	1,449	92.5	5 <sup>th</sup>
Information on supplier of goods	1,449	92.5	6 <sup>th</sup>
Information on religious activities	1,444	92.2	7 <sup>th</sup>
Information on marketing of production	1,439	91.9	8 <sup>th</sup>
Information on current affairs	1,439	91.9	9 <sup>th</sup>
Information on school and education	1,438	91.8	10 <sup>th</sup>
Information on social amenities	1,438	91.8	11 <sup>th</sup>
Information on competitors in the market	1,412	90.2	12 <sup>th</sup>
Information on financial matters	1,372	87.6	13 <sup>th</sup>
Information on credit facilities	1,367	87.3	14 <sup>th</sup>
Information on government policies	1,337	85.4	15 <sup>th</sup>
Information on cooperative societies	1,329	84.9	16 <sup>th</sup>
Information on local events e.g. festival	1,329	84.9	17 <sup>th</sup>
Information on home making	1,317	84.1	18 <sup>th</sup>

Table 1 presents information on the specific information needs of market women in Nigeria and showed market related information (1,555, 99.3%), goods related information (1,553, 99.2%), information on other business (1,498, 95.7%) as topping the list of information needed by textile market women while information on government policies (1,337, 85.4%), information on cooperative societies (1,329, 84.9%),

information on local events such as festivals (1,329, 84.9%) and information on home making (1,317, 84.1%) ranked least among the information needed by textile market women in the selected zones. The implication to be drawn from this result is that information relating to business and markets are major information needs of textile market women in Nigeria.

### The Extent to Which Market Women in Nigeria Seek Information

**Table 2: Extent of Information Seeking by Textile Market Women in Nigeria**

Information areas	Never	Occasionally.	Often	Very often	Mean	Std. Dev
Goods related information	2 (0.1%)	130 (8.3%)	166 (10.6%)	1265 (80.8%)	3.72	.63
Information on financial matters	3 (0.2%)	17 (1.1%)	391 (25.0%)	1083 (69.2%)	3.54	.91
Market related information	156 (10.0%)	128 (8.2%)	317 (20.2%)	962 (61.4%)	3.23	1.00
Information on politics and political parties	38 (2.4%)	130 (8.3%)	807 (51.5%)	586 (37.4%)	3.23	.73
Information on social events	10 (0.6%)	240 (15.3%)	520 (33.2%)	726 (46.4%)	3.16	1.01
Information on marketing of products	1 (0.1%)	299 (19.1%)	499 (31.9%)	692 (44.2%)	3.15	.91
Information on religious activities	37 (2.4%)	165 (10.3%)	791 (50.5%)	550 (35.1%)	3.15	.81
Information on local events e.g. festival	47 (3.0%)	311 (19.9%)	300 (19.2%)	834 (53.3%)	3.13	1.12
Information on current affairs	1 (0.1%)	166 (10.6%)	757 (48.3%)	573 (36.6%)	3.13	.93
Information on government policies	41 (2.6%)	324 (21.8%)	287 (18.3%)	826 (52.7%)	3.12	1.11
Information about manufacturer	141 (9.0%)	113 (7.2%)	714 (45.6%)	596 (38.1%)	3.12	.90
Information about market association meetings	192 (12.3%)	59 (3.8%)	697 (44.5%)	618 (39.5%)	3.11	.95
Information on exchange rate	140 (8.9%)	54 (3.4%)	969 (61.9%)	402 (25.7%)	3.04	.81
Information on school and education	48 (3.1%)	203 (13.0%)	722 (46.1%)	519 (33.1%)	3.00	1.00
Information on social amenities	184 (11.7%)	56 (3.6%)	712 (45.5%)	544 (34.7%)	2.94	1.12
Information on scholarship for children	183 (11.7%)	164 (10.5%)	640 (40.9%)	500 (31.9%)	2.83	1.15
Information about travelling agencies	3 (0.2%)	700 (44.7%)	461 (29.4%)	402 (25.7%)	2.81	.82
Information on cooperative societies	437 (27.9%)	32 (2.0%)	281 (17.9%)	744 (47.5%)	2.76	1.40
Information on loans/credit facilities	382 (24.4%)	174 (11.1%)	916 (58.5%)	90 (5.7%)	2.45	.93
<b>Weighted Average</b>	<b>3.08</b>					

Table 2 showed that the market women sought information about all the areas identified. However, the result further revealed goods related information ( $\chi = 3.72$ ), information on financial matters ( $\chi = 3.54$ ), market related information ( $\chi = 3.23$ ) and information on politics and political parties ( $\chi = 3.23$ )

ranked highest among the information being sought by the textile market women while information about travelling agencies ( $\chi = 2.81$ ), information on cooperative societies ( $\chi = 2.76$ ) and information on loans/credit facilities ( $\chi = 2.45$ ) ranked lowest among the information being sought by textile market

women. On the other hand, using the criterion mean of 2.5 as benchmark for high level information seeking behaviour of textile women in Nigeria, it can be inferred that there is a high level of information

seeking among textile market women in Nigeria since the weighted mean of 3.08 is greater than the criterion mean.

### The Challenges Militating Against Textile Market Women Information Behaviour in Southern Nigeria

This section presents information on possible challenges encountered by textile market women in Southern Nigeria.

**Table 3: Possible Challenges Facing Textile Market Women Information Behaviour**

Possible problems	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Rank
Economic status	1,073	68.5	1 <sup>st</sup>
Lack of awareness	454	29.0	2 <sup>nd</sup>
Individual attitude	451	28.8	3 <sup>rd</sup>
Illiteracy	271	17.3	4 <sup>th</sup>
Lack of skills	218	13.9	5 <sup>th</sup>
Culture	112	7.1	6 <sup>th</sup>

Source: Field work, 2012

Respondents were asked on the major challenges facing them in their information seeking behaviour. Analysis presented in Table 3 revealed that most of the respondents (1,073, 68.5%) affirmed economic status as major challenge. Only few of the respondents affirmed lack of awareness (454, 29%), individual attitude too (451, 28.8%). illiteracy (271,

17.3%), lack of skills (218, 13.9%) and culture (112, 7.1%) as challenges hindering their information seeking behaviour. The implication that could be drawn from the foregoing is that the economic status of textile market women is a major challenge working against their information behavior.

### The Information Behaviour of the Textile Market Women in Southern Nigeria

The respondents were asked to indicate suggestions for improving their information behaviour and the results of their responses are presented below.

**Table 4: Strategies Suggested for Improving Information Behaviour of Textile Market Women in Southern Nigeria**

Possible suggestions	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Be well trained	325	20.8
Be present in meetings	307	19.6
Get at least little education before starting	295	18.8
Sought for capital first	238	15.2
Information should be made public	206	13.2
Schedule constant meetings to help	53	3.4

the new comers		
There should be school of textile market	12	0.8
Power supply should be regular	12	0.8
Make cordial relationship with people	11	0.7
Means of communication should be provided	9	0.6

Source: Field work, 2012

Information on strategies suggested for improving information behaviour of textile market women as drawn from the analysis presented in Table 4 revealed that only few textile market women responded to the question. However, greater percentage of the few that responded affirmed adequate training (325, 20.8%), presence at meeting 307 (307, 19.6%), search for capital (238, 15.2%), and making information public (206, 13.2%) as major strategies for improving the information behaviour of the textile market women in Nigeria. From the above, it can be inferred that training on how to source capital, presence at meetings where important information are being shared, as well as making information public are considered important strategies for improving the information behavior of textile market women in Nigeria.

#### Discussion of findings

The findings from study as presented revealed that textile women in Nigeria recognised their information needs. This was also in line with the research findings of (Bakar, (2011), Saleh and Lasisi, (2011), confirming the ability of women to recognise their information needs in the areas relevant to their day-to-day economic activities. From experience, human beings are active, motivated, goal-oriented and willing to get information about themselves and the world; as directed by intentions and expectations.

However, due to individual dispositions, different factors can constitute barriers to the recognition of information needs, (Anwer, 1987). The implication of this is that information needs are not and cannot be restricted to any social group, age or race. Every individual needs information for varieties of issues essential for his or her survival. This study, therefore, concluded that textile market women in Nigeria had information needs, and these needs were adequately recognised by them. These findings corroborated Williams (2006) and Afolabi (2001) views that

emphasised job-related information, career information, information on financial matters, and credit facilities; education information, health information, social information as well as home management information as major information need areas of women. Foster (2004) and Case (2002), further reiterate that information-seeking is a process by which information needs are pursued. This is also in line with the position of Radecki and Jaccard (2005) that individuals are motivated to seek information which they perceived as useful in their social relationships and economic activities. Also, information-seeking behaviour involves personal reasons for which they are being sought, how and sources through which needed information are obtained. Hence, it can be concluded that market textile women often seek information about their business and other life related issues.

On the possible challenges militating against the information behaviour of the textile market women, findings from the study revealed that culture, lack of adequate skills among the textile market women, negative attitude as well as lack of awareness about available information as major challenges facing textile market women in their search for information. This is in consonance with the findings of Aguolu and Aguolu, (2002) and Ofuoku, et al (2000) that listed barriers highlighted above as constituting major challenges to accessing information by individuals. Other factors identified by Hassan et al., (2008) and Rousan, (2007) include cultural restrictions, low literacy level, lack of sufficient ownership and control of resources, language barrier, and poverty among others. However, this finding is in contrast to Borgers's (1999) view who identified interpersonal problems, social barriers, economic barriers, and environmental/situational barriers as factors facing women in the process of seeking for and using information. Another study has also identified gender



as a limiting factor in accessing information (Kristiansen et al. 2005).

Mchombu (2000) also established that the few studies that have reported on women's use of information in business showed that they have fewer opportunities to exchange information than men do. The implication drawn from the foregoing is that the economic status of textile market women is a major challenge working against their information behaviour. It is concluded that a more holistic and systematic way of implementing small business assistance programmes should be followed if they are to overcome various challenges of information confronting them in order to achieve long-term sustainable development.

Finding from the study further revealed adequate training for textile market women and the making of information public as major strategies that can be used to improve the information behaviour of the textile market women. This finding is at variance with Johnson and Musdike's (2000) view which emphasised the use of interpersonal sources of information as a major strategy in reducing the challenges being faced by women in their search for and use of information. This is because it provides immediate feedback and social support. The implication of this result has shown that information is power and the knowledge to acquire the necessary information needed for textile business should not be compromised. Training is important; the effect is to boost their level of empowerment over socio-economic factors that might create obstacles. But current and up to date information is more important.

### **Conclusion**

Information studies offer tremendous opportunities for women across the world by opening doors to greater self-sufficiency, self-esteem, education and growth to the Nigerian textile women who are intellectually sensitive to recognise their information needs, which cover many areas that have direct and indirect impact on their business. These include market related information, information on cooperative society, loans and credit facilities, manufacturer information and governmental policies among others. Also, they are knowledgeable enough to search for sources of information to address such and translate them into use in decision making toward profitability, capacity building and innovation in business world.

### **Recommendations**

The following recommendations are made in line with findings from the study;

1. To meet the information needs of textile market women, relevant information should be prepared based on the need and in comprehensible formats in the languages understood by textile market women. In this age of information technology, there may be need to utilise audio and video facilities to reach the illiterate women who are otherwise competent and worthy in their own fields of activities.
2. Information professionals should endeavour to document vital and relevant information and as well manage it in order to make it available for future textile market women's use. This will not only meet the business needs of this group of people, but also their general needs.
3. Government agencies in collaboration with the various market women associations should provide information centres where individuals can access current and business related information that can enhance their productivity as well as socio economic empowerment.

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