



Evaluation of Fish Marketing Strategies in Obio Akpor Local Government of Rivers State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT: This study assessed the marketing strategies of fish in in Obio Akpor Local of Rivers State, Nigeria. One hundred and fifty (150) fish marketers were selected using random sampling procedure. The data were collected through the use of questionnaires and were analyzed using descriptive statistics. The result of the socioeconomic characteristics showed that majority of the respondents: 44.67% were within the age bracket of 36-50. Most of the respondents (94.67%) in the study area are women. While, 48.00% had only secondary education, 77.34% were married. Also revealed from the result, 42.00% of fish marketers in the study area had marketing experience of 11 to 15 years. In the study area most (60.00%) of the marketers sourced their fish from importation. Majority (60.67%) of fish marketers pass through the channel: Source to Wholesalers to Retailers to Consumers as the most common channel in the study area. Most of the marketers (60.00%) sold their fish in frozen form. Most of the sellers (33.33%) engaged in open market display to sell their fish. The major constraints faced by the respondents in fish marketing in the study area was insufficient finance, lack of good storage facilities, purchase price instability, poor coordination of markets, inadequate local markets and high transport cost. Based on the results of the study, fish marketers should be encouraged to participate in cooperatives society, so as to attract funds from government and nongovernmental organizations to support their business. Furthermore, policies that will guarantee price stability and improve the microfinance arrangements should be put in place to enhance the business of fish marketing in the study area.

KEY WORDS: Fish, Marketing, Strategies, Rivers State, Nigeria

Received 10 Feb, 2021; Revised: 23 Feb, 2021; Accepted 25 Feb, 2021 © The author(s) 2021.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Fish marketing majorly consists of all the activities involved in delivering fish from the producer to the consumer, through a veritable network of distribution (Bada and Rahji, 2010). Hence, fish marketing may be described as all those functions involved from the point of catching of fish, to the point of final consumption (Alam *et al.*, 2010). As the fish, like any other production moves closer and closer to the ultimate consumer, the selling price increases since the margins and values of the various intermediaries and functionaries are added to it to enhance its worth. However, availability of fish to the final consumers at the right time and in the right place requires an effective and efficient marketing system that will take into cognizance the roles play by individual in the value chain (Department of Fisheries, 2012).

Conversely, marketing and distribution channels are important characteristics in the process of getting produce from source to consumers. However, marketing channels is an identifiable pathway through which goods and services flow before reaching the final consumer (Pauly *et al.*, 2002) On the other hand describes marketing institutions through which goods or services are moved from their producers to their consumers (Flood, 2006). Fish marketing is beyond advertising, selling or making fish available to consumers. It is a key management that brings success to the business (Babalola *et al.*, 2015). Success of fish marketing largely depends on how efficiently the products and services are delivered to consumers and how differently do the consumers perceive the difference in delivery in comparison to the competitors. Fish marketing becomes

profitable only when the products are delivered in a wholesome condition and at a price acceptable to the consumers (Nwabunike, 2015).

Furthermore, marketing strategies on the other hand is all encompassing and involves identification of consumer's needs at a given time, and effective distribution channels to reach them, it also ensures consumer's satisfaction and enhances maximization of profit to key players along the value chain (Yusuf, 2012). Fish marketing plays a vital role in the lives of people living in coastal areas, fishing communities and areas with large concentration of fish farmers and consumers in terms of employment and nutrition (Madugu and Edward, 2011). Despite this, Ali *et al.* (2008) indicated that fish marketing provides additional income to many Nigerians who engaged in distribution of fresh and processed fish in rural and urban areas across the country. However, lack of appropriate marketing strategies, skills and knowledge in marketing had further complicated the situation leaving many fish farmers and fishers struggling to grow market share. As sustainability of fisheries production largely depends on the producers receiving sufficient income. (Aswathy *et al.*, 2014).

Moreover, for the fisheries activity to be profitable, a suitable distribution channel must be selected to ensure that the conditions under which fish and other aquatic resource are to be handled are met on time and with minimal cost. (Adebayo *et al.*, 2014). Fish marketing contributes significantly to the livelihoods and food security of the people in Obio Akpor Local Government, Rivers State, Nigeria and not much research has been carried out to verify marketing strategies of fish marketers in this area, hence, the need for this study. The study therefore, is an attempt to fill the research gap and contribute to the generation of empirical evidence for policy guidance on fish marketing in Obio Akpor Local Government, Rivers State, Nigeria. It is against this background that this study analyzed strategies and constraints of fish marketers in this local government and recommend possible solutions that will lead to sustainable fish production in this area.

II. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study was conducted in Obio/Akpor Local Government Area (LGA), Rivers State, Nigeria. Obio/AkporLGA is one of the two LGAs in Port Harcourt metropolis, Rivers State, Nigeria. Obio-Akpor is bounded by Port Harcourt (Local Government Area) to the south, Oyigbo to the east, Ikwerre to the north, and Emohua to the west. It is located between latitudes 4°45'N and 4°60'N and longitudes 6°50'E and 8°00'E. Port Harcourt is the administrative capital of Rivers State, in the Niger Delta area of Nigeria. Port Harcourt lies between 4.75°N and 7°E with network of rivers and tributaries (e.g., New Calabar, Orashi, Bonny, Sombrero and Bartholomew Rivers) which provide great opportunity for fish farming (Akinrotimi *et al.*, 2007). Obio/Akpor L.G.A is one of the Agricultural Zones of Agricultural Development Programs of Rivers State. Simple random sampling method was used for the study. The sampling frame was obtained from fish marketers in various markets across the local government area.. A total of 150 fish farms were randomly selected from Obio/Akpor LGA. The selected fish farmers were interviewed with the aid of structured questionnaires. The collected data was analyzed using descriptive statistics (such as percentages and frequency tables).

III. RESULTS

The socio-economic characteristics of the respondent in the study area are presented in Table 1. Most of the respondents (44.67%) were within the age group of 36 – 50, which was followed by 15 – 15 (23.33%) and 26 – 35 (20.67%) while the lowest (11.33%) was recorded in the age group of 50 and above. Also, in respect of respondent's sex, 94.67% of them were females, while 5.33% were males. This result agrees with the submission of Cliffe *et al.* (2011) who reported that women are more than men marketing of fishery products in Rivers State, Nigeria.. The study revealed that the majority of the respondents were educated up to secondary school level (48.00%) and have 11-15 years of marketing experience (42.00%).

Sources of fish for marketing in the study area are presented in Table 2. Most of the sellers (60.00%), sourced their fish products from fish importation, 24.67% from aquaculture, 10.0% from industrial fisheries and 5.33% from artisanal fisheries. The marketing channels of fish in the study area are presented in Table 3. Result revealed that most (66.67%) of the fish marketers channeled their products from the source to wholesalers, then to retailers and finally to consumers. While lowest value of 3.37% were recorded in those that channel their products through source to consumers. The form in which the fish are being sold and marketing strategies adopted by the seller in the study area are presented in Tables 4 and 5 respectively. Frozen fish accounted for the highest (60.00%) form of presentation and open market display as the major marketing strategies (33.33%) that is prevalent in the area.. The constraints associated with fish marketing in the study area are shown in Table 6. The most severe problem suffered by fish marketers in the study area was insufficient finance (28.67%), followed by lack of storage facilities (21.33%), transportation problem (15.34%), price fluctuation (7.33%), inadequate local market (7.33%) and inadequate market information (6.00%).

Table 1: Socio-economic Variable of the Respondents (n = 150)

Parameters	Frequency	Percentage
Age (Years)		
15 – 25	35	23.33
26 – 35	31	20.67
36 – 50	67	44.67
50 and above	17	11.33
Total	150	100
Sex		
Male	8	5.33
Female	142	94.67
Total	150	100
Marital Status		
Married	116	77.34
Single	29	19.33
Divorced	5	3.33
Total	150	100
Educational Qualification		
Primary	40	26.67
Secondary	72	48.00
Tertiary	33	22.00
None	5	3.33
Total	150	100
Marketing Experience (Years)		
1 – 5	35	23.33
6 – 10	44	29.34
11 – 15	63	42.00
15 and above	8	5.33
Total	150	100

Source: Field Survey (2020)

Table 2: Sources of Fish for Marketing in the Study Area

Sources of Fish	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Aquaculture	37	24.67
Artisanal Fisheries	8	5.33
Industrial Fisheries	15	10.00
Importation	90	60.00
Total	150	100

Source: Field Survey (2020)

Table 3: Marketing Channels of Fish Marketing in the Study Area

Marketing Channels	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Source to wholesalers to Consumers	35	23.33
Source to retailers to Consumers	10	6.67
Source to wholesalers to retailers to Consumers	100	66.67
Source to Consumers	5	3.33
Total	150	100

Source: Field Survey (2020)

Table 4: Forms of Fish Marketing in the Study Area

Form of Fish Marketing	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Fresh	25	16.67
Smoked	30	20.00
Fried	5	3.33
Frozen	90	60.00
Total	150	100

Source: Field Survey (2020)

Table 5: Marketing Strategies of Fish in the Study Area

Form of Fish Marketing	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Open market display	50	33.33
Hawking	17	11.33
Lock up shops	10	6.67
Use of ICT (GSM) to reach market	11	7.33

Establish a good reputation	12	8.00
Creating effective point fish sale	23	15.34
Access to market information	15	10.00
Membership of marketing group	12	8.00
Total	150	100

Source: Field Survey (2019)

Table 6: Common constraints to fish marketing in the study area

Constraints	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Lack of Good Storage Facilities	32	21.33
Insufficient Finance	43	28.67
High Transportation Cost	23	15.34
Poor coordination of fish marketers	21	14.00
Purchase Price Instability	11	7.33
Inadequate marketing information	9	6.00
Inadequate local markets	11	7.33
Total	150	100

Source: Field Survey (2019)

IV. DISCUSSION

The socio-economic characteristics of the respondent in the study area are presented revealed that most of the respondents (44.67%) were within the age group of 36 – 50. The result indicated that selling of fish is common among younger people than the older ones as fish marketing requires more energy. This agrees with the report of Akinrotimi and Edun (2011) who reported the same among oyster marketers in some fishing communities of Rivers State. The reason may be due to the fact that fish marketing is highly demanding and need energetic individual. Also, in respect of respondent's sex, 94.67% of them were females, while 5.33% were males. This result agrees with the submission of Cliffe *et al.* (2011) who reported that women are more than men marketing of fishery products in Rivers State, Nigeria. The study revealed that the majority of the respondents were educated up to secondary school level (48.00%) and has 11-15 years of marketing experience (42.00%). This assertion is in line with the opinion of Anyanwu *et al.* (2007) in some communities of Niger Delta. This implies that smoked fish marketing and trade is dominated by literate class. This implies that the smoked fish marketer will be more receptive to accepting the innovation in fish marketing and trade.

In the study area, most of the sellers (60.00%), sourced their fish products from fish importation, 24.67% from aquaculture, 10.0% from industrial fisheries and 5.33% from artisanal fisheries. This result agrees with the findings of Akinrotimi *et al.* (2007) who reported similar trend in some communities in Niger Delta. They observed that fish from frozen fish is highly desirable among people living in the urban areas of Niger Delta. Result from the study area revealed that most (66.67%) of the fish marketers channeled their products from the source to wholesalers, then to retailers and finally to consumers. While lowest value of 3.37% were recorded in those that channel their products through source to consumers. Fish Marketing is the means through which a product or commodity reaches the final consumer from the producer. This is in conformity with findings of Akinrotimi *et al.* (2009) who reported that in most parts of Rivers State, fish products are marketed from source to wholesalers, then to retailers who in turn sell to the consumers. In the study area, open market display was the major marketing strategies that is prevalent in the area This observation conforms with that of Edun *et al.* (2010) in some parts of Niger Delta.

The most severe problem suffered by fish marketers in the study area was insufficient finance (28.67%), followed by lack of storage facilities (21.33%), transportation problem (15.34%), price fluctuation (7.33%), inadequate local market (7.33%) and inadequate market information (6.00%). This is in line with the report of Akinrotimi *et al.* (2009) who reported the same trend in Periwinkle marketers in some coastal communities of Rivers State. They reported that finance is a major challenge to the fishery activities in most areas of Rivers State. The challenges faced by the respondents are related to institutional inefficiency resulting in marketers inaccessibly to financial institution, lack of storage facilities, and increased cost of fish transportation. The finding collaborates study report of Agbebi (2012) that those in fisheries business have-not felt the impact of extension in Ekiti state. Marketing involves a lot of problems which often times hinder the objectives of the producer which is to satisfy consumer wants and to ensure the profitability of the firm. Profitable marketing of fish is a constant challenge to the industry (Amin *et al.*, 2012). Moreover, Michael (2014) observed that the problems of agricultural products are not the instability of the marketable surplus which is affected by loss in the distributive system. Then unavailability of adequate transportation (roads, vehicles, rails etc) also hinder effective distribution of goods from one point to another. Lack of capital also constitutes a problem in the marketing process.

V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study marketing of fish can be a lucrative business in the study area if well-managed. The limitations to fish marketing were related to policy issues and infrastructure in terms of access to financial resources, efficient means of transportation and extension service delivery.

Based on the research findings, the following policy recommendations are therefore proffered;

1. Fish marketers should form a co-operative society to enable them obtain loan from financial institutions so as to expand their marketing activities.
2. Government and private organization should encourage fish marketers by building an organized market and effecting free trade within the study area.
3. Government should provide more equipments such as cold rooms to enable fish marketer get fish for sale in fresh form and modern smoking kilns for smoking fish easier.
4. Government should also provide transportation facilities and good infrastructural facilities within the study area to encourage the fish marketers to transport their products from one place to another.

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