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ANALYSIS OF OYSTER MARKETING AMONG WOMEN IN OKRIKA LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF RIVERS STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The study analyzed oyster marketing among women in Okrika Local Government Area of Rivers State. The objectives were to: identify the socio – economic characteristics of the respondents; determine profitability of oyster marketing, ascertain the benefits associated with oyster marketing and identify the constraints associated with oyster marketing in the study area data were collected through the use of a questionnaire. A total of ninety (90) respondents were selected from nine communities, 10 persons from each of the nine communities selected from Okirika Local Government Area. Data were analyzed with the use of frequency, percentage, mean scores, ordinary least square (OLS) multiple regression and farm budget technique/. Findings show that 34.8% of the respondents were between 41 – 50 years, 53.4% were married, had formal education 31.3%, had an income level between #26,000 - #39,000 (32.5%), and household size (7) between 11 – 15 years (27.9%). The mean age was 45 years. Level of women participation size was 7 persons and number of years into oyster marketing was 13 years. Levels of women participation at oyster marketing were: retailing – removing oyster shells and selling (x = 2.82), roasting of oysters as a means of preservation (x= 2.60) and distributing oysters to buyers (x = 2.51). the result of the linear regression analysis showed that at R^2 of 0.45 and F ratio of 0.7945, income level of (3.91) and household size (7.22) were significant positive at p greater than or equal to 0.05. benefits of oyster to rural women were: it reduced rural – urban migration (x = 2.50), it was a means of livelihood to women (x = 2.52), it reduced poverty (x = 2.52) and it helped to provide jobs (x = 2.60). oyster marketing from the mangrove (wholesale) had highest profit of #35,000 per month followed by middlemen with a profit of #19,200and retailers with a profit of #16,800 per week. The major constraints to oyster marketing were low funds (x = 2.82), low technology (x = 2.50), water pollution by oil activity (X=2.92), water pollution by human activity (X=2.60), distant creek (X=2.2.81) and lack of extension services (X=2.51). the study recommends that water pollution by oil and human activities should be tackled by the government by monitoring illegal processing of crude oil in the area.

Keywords: Analysis of Oyster, Marketing, Women in Okrika Local Government Area

INTRODUCTION

Agriculture is the main stay of almost every developing countries. it has been the major contributor of Gross Domestic Product (GDP), the fishery sector has recorded the fastest growth rate in the agriculture to the GDP (Kudi et al., 2008). The contribution of the sub-sector to the GDP rose from #76.76 billion in 2001 to 162.61billion naira (CBN 2005). Noting is more important than food, A nation that cannot feed itself becomes a threat to its existence. The fishery sector is a major contributor. Nigeria is a maritime state blessed with aquatic resources like Oyster which is another main source of protein and delicacy among the Okirikan's and other riverine communities in Rivers State of Nigeria. The fishery sub-sector especially Oyster is a significant source of fish food and livelihood for many households in these rural communities (Akinrotimiet al., 2007).

Oyster (Crassostreagasar) is a natural asset found along the West African coast and grows abundantly on mangrove roots in the Niger Delta (Ainowi, 1983). Mangrove Oysters grow and survive in the man-made structures in areas where the salinity is high enough (10-15%) to permit Oyster growth. growth is so rapid at the prevailing high temperatures in mangrove areas, that oysters of a size which may be marketed after one season (i.e. eight months) are obtained.
Oyster is a mollusc with a soft un-segmented body protected by two permanent hard shells which increase in size as the animal grows. Oysters are nutritious food organisms rich in protein, mineral and vitamins. Their importance as food has helped numerous countries culturing them to build up foreign exchange earnings. Oyster feed on microscopic detritus (Emmanuel et al, 2016). The flesh of oyster is like periwinkle and other sea food is widely used in the preparation of delicacies amongst the Okrikans and other riverine communities, while its shells sometimes are used for construction works and for poultry feeds when mixed properly. Oyster is widely harvested in the swamps by women and sold at wholesale or retail. They can survive for days when kept under shades away from sun.

Statement of the problem

World, women in fishing communities have been observed to participate actively in fisheries activities and also play a part in the maintenance of their families (Nwabeze*et al.,* 2013) in many parts of the world, women have engaged actively in fish business. In the European countries, for instance, women control 39% of the fish industry, making ahuge amount of money for themselves and their families (Aguilar, 2002). The crucial engagement of women in natural resources-based occupation such as oyster production, processing and marketing in the rural communities has long been accepted but nor recognized and not valued as main contribution (Obetta*et al.,* 2007).
The failure rate of agricultural business in Nigeria is very high. It is estimated that approximately 50% of all start-up small scale fisheries fail in their first year and 75% to 80% fail within their first three to five years in Nigeria (Nwachukwu, 2000). The reason is that many of these small-scale fisheries are not able to thrive in the industry due to lack of competitiveness, especially during the economic crisis (Nwachukwu, 2000). Although government has given its full support on agricultural sector in terms of provision of extension services, financial facilities (loans) and others but their performance is still low in terms of increased sales, profitability and market share. Whereas there is concentration of effort in assisting fish farmers through trainings, provision of fishing materials, fingerlings etc, other aquatic families like periwinkle oysters etc attract little or no contribution.
Oysters marketing is one of the major occupations for most women in Okirika Local Government Area. These women are engaged in oyster harvesting processing and marketing Oysters is an important activity that is predominant in the coastal areas of Rivers State. The role of women in oyster related activities in these areas are very crucial and critical to the overall economy of the state but policy maker usually overlook the important role that women play in this activity. This study therefore, is carried out to analyze oyster marketing among women in Okirika LGA of Rivers State as a means of boosting food security and improving the livelihood of the people in these communities.

Objectives of the Study

The broad objective of this study was to analyze Oyster marketing amongst women in Okirika local government of Rivers State, Nigeria. The specific objectives were to;

i. Identify socio-economic characteristics of women marketing oyster in Okirika Local Government Area;
ii. Determine the level of women involvement in oyster marketing/distribution in the study area;
iii. Determine profitability of oyster marketing in the area of study;

iv. Ascertain the benefits associated with oyster marketing; and
v. Identify the constraints associated with oyster marketing in the study area

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Study Area

The area of the study is Okrika Local Government Area. Okrika is one of the tribe of Ijaw people in Rivers State, Nigeria. The capital of the Local Government Area bears same name. The town is situated on a small island south of Port Harcourt, making it a suburb of the much larger city. The average elevation of Okrika is 452 metres. Latitude: 4°44′31.74″ N Longitude: 7°05′1.25″ E. it lies on the north of the Bonny River and on Okrika Island, 35 miles (56 km) upstream from the Right of Bonny. The town can be reached be vessels of a draft of 29 feet (9 metres) or less. Okrika Local Government can be accessed by road and by sea. The Local Government is made up of 12 wards. The major economic activity among the people in Okrika is fishing and farming. There is a huge potential for fishing that is yet to be fully harnessed. Okrika has approximately one third of its area covered by water (Rivers and Creeks) of Saline nature. The remaining land masses are thick mangrove forest which is a suitable habitat for shell fish such as periwinkle *(Tympanotonuousfuscatus)* locally called 'Islam' oyster *(Crassostreagasar),* locally called "Imgbe" *(Tagelusadansonia)* locally called Ofengo and whelk locally Ngolo. There is a huge potential for fishing that is yet to be fully employed, the Okrikans are also engaged in trading.
The Okrikans share similar culture/language to the Kalabaris, Bonny, Bayelsa Ijaws and other riverine communities.

Sampling Procedure and Sample Size

The study employed multi stage sampling procedure. The sample size is 90 women engaged in the marketing of oyster in Okrika Local Government Area. Firstly, purposive sampling was used to select nine communities namely; Abam, DUmo-ama, Ekerekana, George ama, Ibaka, Ogoloma, Ogbogbo, Oba-ama, Okujagu-ama, all in Okrika Local Government Area based on the extent of oyster marketing in the area.

Table 1: *The Table Below Shows theList of Towns and Villages in Okrika and the Number of Respondents Selected*

LGA	Number of Communities	Selected Communities	Selected Respondents
OKRIKA	Abam-ama	Abam-ama	10
	Abiobo-ama	Ekerekana	10
	Alakiri	George-ama	10
	Asemeningolike	Ibaka	10
	Dikibo- ama	Ogbogbo	10
	Ekerekana	Ogoloma	10
	George-ama	Dumo-ama	10
	Ibaka	Oba-ama	10
	Ibuluya	Okujaguama	10
	Ikiriko-ama		
	Isaka		
	Iyo kiri		
	Kalio-ama		
	Dumo-ama		

	Oba-ama		
	Ogan-ama		
	Ogbogbo		
	Ogoloma		
	Okochiri		
	Okujagu-ama		
	Okumgba-ama		
TOTAL	23	**9**	**90**

Method of Data Collection

Data for the study were collected from primary source. The primary data collection was achieved with the aid of a structured interviewed scheduled.

Methodof Data Analysis

Descriptive, farm budget technique and a four-point Likert-type scale were used. Descriptive statistics involved the use of frequency, percentage and mean. Objective 1, was achieved using descriptive statistics. Objectives 2, 4 & 5 were analyzed using a four-point Likert-type scale with options; strongly agree and strongly disagree.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Socio-Economic Characteristics of the Respondents

The result in Table 2 shows the various Socio-economic Characteristics of the Respondents in the Study Area

Table 2: Frequency Distribution of Respondents According to their Socio-economic characteristics.

Characteristics	Frequency	(%)	Mean (x)
Age range			
20 – 30	20	23.2	45 years
31 – 40	23	26.7	
41 – 50	30	34.8	
51 – 60	10	11.6	
60 and above	3	3.4	
Total	**86**	**100**	
Sex			
Female	86	100	
Total	**86**	**100**	
Marital Status			
Married	46	53.4	
Single	18	20.9	
Widow/Widower	10	11.6	
Divorced	12	13.9	
Total	**86**	**100**	
Educational Level			
No formal	18	20.9	
First School (FSLC)	27	31.3	
SSCE/NECO/GCE	23	26.7	
ND/NCR/HND	13	15.1	

B.SC/B.ed	5	5.8	
Total	**86**	**100**	
Number of Years in Oyster Marketing			
1 – 5	15	17.4	13 years
6 – 10	17	19.7	
11 – 15	24	27.9	
16 – 20	20	23.2	
21 years and above	10	11.6	
Total	**86**	**100**	
Household Size			
1 – 4	21	24.4	
4–8	40	46.5	7members
9–12	25	29.0	
Total	**86**	**100**	
Income level (#) Per Month ₦)			
15,000 – 20,000	18	20.9	
21,000 – 25,000	15	17.4	₦33,500
26,000 – 30,000	15	17.4	
31,000 – 35,000	28	32.5	
36,000 and above	10	11.6	
Total	**86**	**100**	

Socio-Economic Characteristics

Results in Table 2 shows that majority (34.8%) of the respondents are between the age of 41 – 50 years as followed by 26.7% of the respondents who were between31 – 40 years. While 23.2% were between 20 – 30 years and 11.6% of the respondents were between 51 – 60 years, respectively while 3.4% was above 60 years. This indicates that women in Oyster marketing were between 41 – 50 years, implying that the women are still active, vibrant women who are in their productive years. The mean age is 45 years.

Marital Status

Table 2 shows that majority (53.4%) of the respondents are married while 20.9% are single followed by 13.9% who were divorced. 11.6% are widow/widower. This implies that women who are into Oyster marketing are responsible women who have family to care for and therefore require more income.

Education level

The result in Table 2 shows that majority (31.3%) of the respondents had primary education, 20.9% had no formal education, 26.7% had secondary school education, and 20.9% had tertiary

education. This implies women in oysters marketing can read and write and so would want to adopt skills that will improve their income in oyster marketing.

Years of Experience

Experience is the art of gaining knowledge through practices of skill which brings about specialization. The women in oyster marketing have enough experience on the profitability, status and challenges of oyster harvesting. Albert and Charles (2015) observed that long years of experience in farming activities enable participants to have deeper knowledge of the business and how to overcome challenges.

Household size

Household size of oyster marketers is noted with high tendency ratio in table 4.1. Majority (46.5%) of the respondents has household size between 5 – 8 persons, 21% have 1 – 4 persons and 25% have 9 – 12 persons. The mean household size is 7. This indicate high household size. It is obvious that large household size helps to increase the output of Oyster, it will also increase the consumption rate by the household and thereby causing a reduction in the overall household income. According to Albert (2012) large household size requires more income although it is helpful in farm labor.

Monthly Income (₦)

The result from table 2 shoes the monthly income analysis of the respondents depends on their volume of cash/output. Majority (32.5%) earned #31,000 - #35,000 per month, 17.4% earn #26,000 – 30,000, 20.9% earn between 15,000 – 20,000, 17.4% earn between 21,000 – 25,000, while 11.6% is within 36,000 and above. This indicate that majority of the respondents earned above #20,000 which is quite encouraging. The mean income of #33,000 per month. This shows that oyster marketing is economically rewarding and can be used to tackle poverty among rural people (women) in the study area.

DISCUSSION

The structured questions for 90 respondents was administered out of which 86 respondents. From the table, giving the socio-economic characteristics of the respondents, it is seen that all respondents are female. They are at the age range of 45 states that they are still very strong to carry out the marketing activities which involves going out to procure the products for sale. The table also showed majority of the respondents as married women which indicates they have their children and other to cater for thereby assisting their husbands in providing for the family. From the data given it is also seen that majority of them have FSLC which enables them to be able to relate successively with their customers and calculate properly. The respondents from data showed they have been in the business for 13 years which gave them opportunity to manage it properly. From the data it is seen that one of their major constraints is lack of fund to enable them expand their business which is in agreement with Albert (2012). Lack of funding was a major constraint to sea food harvesters.

A greater number of the correspondents have a larger household size of between 5 to 8 members indicating that through the marketing they are able to provide for their large families.

From the data, the marketing of oysters has been able to create jobs for women to enable them become self-employed and are able to cater for their families.

In the study area, most of the women are involved in the marketing of oysters and other sea food. Some of are engaged in the harvesting of oyster and other small-scale business. In so doing, they have considerably contributed to national agricultural output, maintenance of the environment and food security as agreed by (Brown et al, 2001).

CONCLUSION

The study revealed that oyster marketing and sales has contributed greatly to the rural people by providing means of livelihood to rural household. Income level and household size were significantly positive at P,or equal 0.05.

Finally, water pollution by oil and gas spillage, poor mobility to improve distant creek, low technology, lack of extension services and fund for expansion was the major problems faced by the respondents in the study area.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the above Conclusions, the Recommendations for the study include:

1. Extension agents contact should be improve to reach out to the oyster marketers. This will help in improving the productivity of women in the rural area and as well as create awareness for new innovations and technologies to adopt.
2. The local government assist in providing subsidized transport fares to enable oyster marketers go and procure their goods and sell at reasonable prices.
3. The technology of culturing oyster should be encouraged by the government to sustain the availability of oyster in order to avoid total extinct of the product due to pollution and other activities.

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