

Assessment of Internet Marketing of Cassava Tubers; Its Implications to Nigeria Cashless Policy in Portharcourt Metropolis

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ABSTRACT

This study assesses the internet marketing of Cassava tubers and its implications to Nigeria cashless policy in Port Harcourt metropolis, Rivers State. A random sampling technique was used for the selection of 83 respondents of cassava tuber marketers in Port Harcourt metropolis. Primary data was used and collected with the aid of structured questionnaire. Descriptive Statistics and percentage analysis were used to analyse the data. It was revealed that 61% of the respondents are females, while 39% of males. Implying that there are more women participants in the marketing of cassava tubers than men. Also 59% were between the ages of 20-40years, and 36% were between the ages of 40-60years; Implying that most of the respondents are of active age. Findings further shows that about 50.60% of respondent had no form of formal education, while 33.73% had only primary education. This implies that majority of cassava tuber marketers have no formal education. It was found that 59% of respondent have marketing experience of 0-6years and 34.94% of respondents had an experience of 6-12years in cassava tuber marketing. This is an indication that most of the marketers have significant experience in cassava tuber marketing. Furthermore, a percentage of 51.81% of respondents are married and this attributes to the fact that cassava tuber marketing is a profitable venture that can serve as a reliable source of livelihood for the family. 59% has household size of 0-5 persons, this implies that majority of marketers had or utilized family labour during operations. Most half of the world population has access to the internet; this is unreasonably in developed nations like Nigeria and other African nations, in rural communities where education and literacy rates are significantly low, mobile phones technology tends to be used for communication and social media. This offers a great difficulty for the introduction of digital agriculture applications which necessitates more forward thinking digital skills, low global Smartphone ownership in rural communities in addition to the high cost of internet and insufficient system coverage also present difficulties of mobile agricultural applications. An effective internet marketing medium of cassava tubers, given the cashless policy can help to increase the demand for the crop, and improve the livelihood of marketers and other stakeholders in the value chain. From the above information gotten, there is need for educating and creating the awareness of internet marketing tools as a marketing medium; as this would help to save cost and increase Marketer's Revenue. There is need for Creating/Educating the Awareness of the internet, as a marketing tool given the cashless policy in Nigeria, Subsidy on internet devices/gadgets should be established by the government; in order to improve internet marketing of products sequel to the cashless policy. There is a need for adequate internet platforms, for the marketing of agricultural producers.

Key words: Internet marketing, Assessment, Cassava tuber, Cashless policy and Implications

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Cassava is usually a source of food in Nigeria and consumed by many. Cassava is a perennial vegetative propagated shrub grown throughout the lowland tropic for its starchy, thickened roots. Throughout the tropics, its roots and leaves provide essential calories and income (Ola, 2020). Global production of cassava

amounted to about 278 million metric tons in 2018 out of which Africa's share was put at about production has been on the increase from about 240 million metric tons from 2021, from which Nigeria has produced up to 42.5 million metric tonnes which is estimated to be about the world's 18% cassava production rate in that time (Food and Agricultural Organization Statistics, 2020). About one-third of the total national output comes from the Niger Delta region where many households depend on it as a main source of food and income. It has been estimated that the number of small commercially oriented cassava producers within the region would be in the range of 70,000-120,000 (out of the more than 1 million producers) and over 400 to 500 cooperatives and cottage industries, 800,000-950,000 traders, 46 small medium processing industries and one (1) large processing industry in the region (National Bureau of Statistics 2021). Apart from livestock feeds, processed cassava serves as industrial raw material for the production of adhesives, bakery products, dextrin, dextrose glucose, lactose and sucrose. Food and beverage industries use cassava products in the production of jelly caramel and chewing-gum, pharmaceutical and chemical industries also use cassava alcohol (ethanol) in cosmetic and drug production. Cassava cubes are used mainly in the compounding of livestock feeds. Efficiency in cassava marketing is an important determinant of both consumers' living cost and producers' income and the potentials of cassava marketing to agricultural and overall economic development cannot be over-emphasized. The growth in cassava production has been primarily due to rapid population growth, large internal market demand, complemented by the availability of high yielding improved varieties of cassava, a relatively well-developed market access infrastructure, the existence of improved processing technology and a well-organized internal market structure (FAO, 2018). The Federal Government's policy of including cassava flour in bread and other confectioneries to substitute wheat flour has presented great opportunities for investors and marketers alike. Computer network hardware and software, satellite system and so on as well as the various services and application associated with them such as video conferencing and distance learning can be used as online marketing tools. There is a vast scope for adoption of the internet in cassava marketing for improving its efficiency of sales thereby leading to increase in profits for the marketers. This will also enable understanding of the constraints limiting the use of the internet for market sales. Internet application in cassava marketing tends to mitigate time spent on sale of product and increases level of awareness. Agricultural marketing efficiency has been bedevilled by both external and internal market related factors. These factors are also peculiar to cassava (fufu) marketing in Nigeria. The market may have served the economy well in the past but currently inadequate in the face of growing demand for products due to population growth and changing dietary demand pattern. Agricultural marketing information is scarce in Nigeria because the required data are not available online and those available are not well managed to generate the required information to support decision making by the marketers and consumer (Adeniyi, 2018).

INTRODUCTION

Cassava is usually a source of food in Nigeria and consumed by many. Cassava is a perennial vegetative propagated shrub grown throughout the lowland tropic for its starchy, thickened roots. Throughout the tropics, its roots and leaves provide essential calories and income (Ola, 2020). Global production of cassava amounted to about 278 million metric tons in 2018 out of which Africa's share was put at about production has been on the increase from about 240 million metric tons from 2021, from which Nigeria has produced up to 42.5 million metric tonnes which is estimated to be about the world's 18% cassava production rate in that time (Food and Agricultural Organization Statistics, 2020). About one-third of the total national output comes from the Niger Delta region where many households depend on it as a main source of food and income. It has been estimated that the number of small commercially oriented cassava producers within the region would be in the range of 70,000-120,000 (out of the more than 1 million producers) and over 400 to 500 cooperatives and cottage industries, 800,000-950,000 traders, 46 small medium processing industries and one (1) large processing industry in the region (National Bureau of Statistics 2021). Apart from livestock feeds, processed cassava serves as industrial raw material for the production of adhesives, bakery products, dextrin, dextrose glucose, lactose and sucrose. Food and beverage industries use cassava products

in the production of jelly caramel and chewing-gum, pharmaceutical and chemical industries also use cassava alcohol (ethanol) in cosmetic and drug production. Cassava cubes are used mainly in the compounding of livestock feeds (Adeniyi 2018) Efficiency in cassava marketing and its implication to Nigeria cashless policy is an important determinant of both consumers' living cost and producers' income and the potentials of cassava marketing to agricultural and overall economic development cannot be over-emphasized. The growth in cassava production has been primarily due to rapid population growth, large internal market demand, complemented by the availability of high yielding improved varieties of cassava, a relatively well-developed market access infrastructure, the existence of improved processing technology and a well- organized internal market structure (FAO, 2018). The Federal Government's policy of including cassava flour in bread and other confectioneries to substitute wheat flour has presented great opportunities for investors and marketers alike. Computer network hardware and software, satellite system and so on as well as the various services and application associated with them such as video conferencing and distance learning can be used as online marketing tools. There is a vast scope for adoption of the internet in cassava marketing and its implication to Nigeria cashless policy for improving its efficiency of sales thereby leading to increase in profits for the marketers. This will also enable understanding of the constraints limiting the use of the internet for market sales (Amanze, 2019) Internet application in cassava marketing and its implication to Nigeria cashless policy tends to mitigate time spent on sale of product and increases level of awareness. Agricultural marketing efficiency and its implication to cashless policy has been bedevilled by both external and internal market related factors. These factors are also peculiar to cassava (fufu) marketing in Nigeria (Amanze, 2019) The market may have served the economy well in the past but currently inadequate in the face of growing demand for products due to population growth and changing dietary demand pattern. Agricultural marketing information is scarce in Nigeria because the required data are not available online and those available are not well managed to generate the required information to support decision making by the marketers and consumers (Amanze, 2019)

Objectives

The aim of the study is to evaluate internet marketing of cassava tuber and its implication to Nigeria cashless policy in Port Harcourt Metropolis, Rivers State Nigeria. The specific objectives of this study are:

1. To describe the socio-economic characteristics of the cassava marketers using internet marketing tools in Port Harcourt Metropolis in Rivers State.
2. To describe the marketing system of cassava tuber marketers in Port Harcourt Metropolis in Rivers State.
3. To know the constraints affecting internet marketing of cassava tubers and its implications to Nigeria cashless policy in Port Harcourt Metropolis in Rivers State.

METHODOLOGY

Port Harcourt Metropolis in Rivers State was chosen for this research due to its economic significance in agriculture in the state. Port Harcourt metropolis is located between Latitude 4°45'N and Latitude 4°55'N, and Longitude 6°55'E and Longitude 7°05'E in Rivers State. It is a city in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. Port Harcourt metropolis spans over two local government areas (LGAs). The industrial operations types that exist in the study area include: Seismic, Oil and Gas Exploration, Manufacturing, sales and marketing, Agriculture, and Human Capital Development. Historically, the inhabitants of the study area are known as marketers, the marketing pattern 30 to 50 years ago are cultivated on seasonal marketing of different species of agriculture ranging from yam, cassava, vegetables, corn, and others including poultry but rapid population growth and urbanization has taken over quantifiable land resorting to land use change The population of this study comprise of cassava tuber marketers in Port Harcourt Metropolis of Rivers State, The random sampling technique was used to select the respondents for this study; And a sample size of 83

respondents was selected as long as they fall within the study population, Primary data for this study was sourced through a combination of observation and interviewing technique. Interviews were done with the aid of a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire was structured in three sections. Four points modified Likert Scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD) was used.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: Socioeconomic Characteristics of the Respondents

Socioeconomic characteristics of the respondents described in this study include: age, sex, educational level, marital status, household sizes and cassava tuber marketing experience. The results of the descriptive analysis of the marketers' socioeconomic are presented in table

TABLE 1: Socioeconomic Characteristics of Cassava Tuber Marketers Showing the Result for Objective 1

SOCIOECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS	CATEGORIES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
Age	20-40	49	59.3
	41-60	30	36.14
	61-80	40	4.81
	80 and above	0	0
Gender	Male	32	38.55
	Female	51	61.45
Marital status	Single	23	27.71
	Married	43	51.81
	Divorced	3	3.61
	Widowed	14	16.86
Educational status	Primary	28	33.73
	Secondary	10	12.05
	Tertiary	3	3.62
	No formal education	42	50.60

Household size	0-5	49	59.04
	6-10	32	38.55
	11-15	3	2.41
Marketing experience	0-6	49	59.04
	7-12	29	34.94
	13-20	5	6.02

Source; field survey 2023.

It was revealed that 61% of the respondents are females, while 39% of males. Implying that there are more women participants in the marketing of cassava tubers than men. Also 59% were between the ages of 20-40years, and 36% were between the ages of 40-60years; Implying that most of the respondents are of active age. Findings further shows that about 50.60% of respondent had no form of formal education, while 33.73% had only primary education. This implies that majority of cassava tuber marketers have no formal education. It was found that 59% of respondent have marketing experience of 0-6years and 34.94% of respondents had an experience of 6-12years in cassava tuber marketing. This is an indication that most of the marketers have significant experience in cassava tuber marketing. Furthermore, a percentage of 51.81% of respondents are married and this attributes to the fact that cassava tuber marketing is a profitable venture that can serve as a reliable source of livelihood for the family. 59% has household size of 0-5 persons, this implies that majority of marketers had or utilized family labour during operations.

Table 2: Description of the Marketing of Cassava Tuber Showing the Result for Objective 2

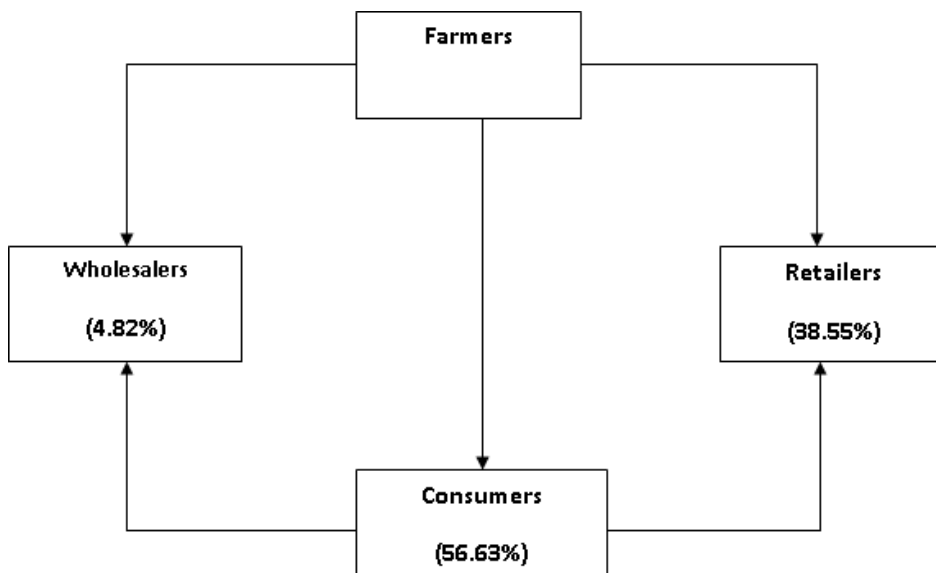
CHARACTERISTICS	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Cultivation of Cassava Tubers by Marketers		
No	18	21. 969
Yes	65	78. 31
Maturity period of cassava tubers		
7 Months	9	10. 85
11 Months	5	6. 02
12 Months	69	83. 13
Source of purchase of cassava tuber		
Farmers	69	83. 13
Community	3	3. 62
Association	11	13. 25

Market channel for cassava tubers		
Wholesalers	4	4.82
Retailers	32	38.55
Consumers	47	56.63
Total	83	100%

Source; field survey 2023

The Description of the marketing system of cassava tubers was done by a descriptive analysis presented in the table above. And, it shows that about 78% of cassava tuber marketers are farmers and get the cassava tubers they sell from their various farms and other farmers within the community. 4.8% of cassava tubers are sold to wholesalers, 38.55% to retailers and 56.63% directly to the consumers. This implies that some wholesalers ,retailers and consumers have direct relationship with the cassava tuber marketers.

Schematic Representation of the Marketing Channels of Cassava Tubers



The marketing channel for cassava tubers consist of the farmers who sold to the wholesalers, retailers and consumers directly. Due to the proximity between the point of production and consumption, the retailers, wholesalers and consumers obtains direct supply from producers

Table 3: Constraints Faced by Respondents in Internet Marketing Showing the Result for Objective 3

QUESTION	SA	A	D	SD	PERCENTAGE (%)	REMARK
Lack of technical know-how	(22)27	(40)48	(19)23	(2)2	100	Agree
Lack of internet access	(20)24	(33)40	(29)35	(1)1	100	Agree
High cost of internet devices/gadgets.	(25)30	(29)35	(27)33	(2)2	100	Agree
Inadequate platform for proper marketing	(20)24	(31)37	(29)35	(3)4	100	Agree
Ineffective internet promotions	(19)23	(40)48	(24)29	(0)0	100	Agree
Poor Network Connection	(4)5	(30)36	(42)51	(7)8	100	Agree

Source; field survey 2023

From the above data gotten, one can tell that the major constraints toward internet marketing of cassava tubers are the lack of technical know-how and high cost of internet devices/gadgets. Whereas the least constrain is poor network connections.

CONCLUSION

An effective internet marketing medium of cassava tubers, given the cashless policy can help to increase the demand for the crop, and improve the livelihood of marketers and other stakeholders in the value chain. From the above information gotten, there is need for educating and creating the awareness of internet marketing tools as a marketing medium; as this would help to save cost and increase Marketer's Revenue.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. There is need for Creating/Educating the Awareness of the internet, as a marketing tool given the cashless policy in Nigeria.
2. Subsidy on internet devices/gadgets should be established by the government; in order to improve internet marketing of products sequel to the cashless policy.
3. There is a need for adequate internet platforms, for the marketing of agricultural producers

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