

THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS OF FISH MARKETERS IN ABAKALIKI METROPOLIS OF EBONYI STATE

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ABSTRACT: *This study assessed the socio-economics of fish marketers within Abakaliki metropolis of Ebonyi State. The objectives of the study were to describe the socio-economic characteristics of fish marketers in the study area, as well as identify the different species of fish in Abakaliki markets. Primary Data were collected using structured questionnaire administered through personal interview of the fish marketers. Data collected were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Objectives 1 and 2 were analyzed using tables and percentages. From the analysis, it was observed that majority, (90%) of the fish marketers were female and (47%) were married. (41.43%) of them are 30 years and above. (54.29%) of them attempted secondary school. (24.29%) of them attempted higher schools among whom were in schools and still struggling for sustenance. (17.14%) finished primary school while (4.29%) had no formal education. They had household size of 7-9 (44.29%), 4-6(37.14%). The data gathered also showed that scomber marketers are mostly engaged in fresh fish selling (48.57%). They mostly sourced their fish from wholesalers or cold house operators (61.43%). The result showed that majority of them were women who used their income to assist their family in one way or the other. It also showed that most of their wares were sourced from imported fish. Based on these findings of the study, the following recommendations were made; government should create more incentives that will push more people into fish farming to reduce the rate of importation. Most fresh fish sellers should call for government assistance in the area of electricity supply to enable them keep unsold fishes till the next day.*

KEYWORDS: Fish Marketers, Abakaliki Metropolis, Ebonyi State, Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

Fish being a perishable product has been facing lots of marketing challenges in the developing countries. Hunger and malnutrition remain amongst the most devastating problems facing the world poor and needy [3]. About 80 to 90 million people have been fed yearly and most reliable source of protein for many is fish, yet millions of people who depend on fish are faced daily with the fear of food shortage. With the population of Nigeria on the rise, there is a corresponding demand for fish consumption. Thus, there is the need for a suitable agricultural system to meet the increasing demand for food, and also maximize the utilization of the available limited resources without much wastage. In view of this, integrated fish farming fit

exactly into this. Integrated fish farming is a diversified and coordinated way of farming with fish as the main target [2] along with other farm products.

Despite the abundance of human and natural resources, Nigeria depends largely on importation to meet its fish consumption needs. Fish is one of the most diverse group of animals known to man with more than 20,500 species. In fact, to many Nigerians on the coastal areas, creeks and rivers, fish is one of their major source of protein which is essential for healthy human growth. The shortfall has resulted in a low animal per capital consumption rate of 7.5 kg against the 13 kg recommended by the food and agriculture organization [2].

Marketing is a process of exchanging goods and services from one person to another with reference to price. A fish market is a market place used for marketing of fish and fish products. However, fish marketing essentially consists of all the activities involved in delivering fish from the producer to the consumer, while distribution provides channels that link the marketing institutions and producers together. Fish marketing may be broadly defined as all those functions involved from the point of catching of fish, to the point of final consumption. As the fish, like any other production moves closer and closer to the ultimate consumer, the selling price increases since the margins of the various intermediaries and functionaries are added to it. The price efficiency is concerned with improving the operation of buying, selling and other connected aspects of marketing process so that it will remain responsive to consumer direction [1].

Marketing plays an important role in a market economy. The role of marketing as an incentive to fish production and productivity cannot be over emphasized. The marketing of agricultural commodities in Nigeria involves various markets or exchange points. The number of exchange points depends on the nature of the point of production and that of consumption. If the marketing process is efficient, it will go a long way in providing sufficient food to the populace through the process of market mechanism. The influence of market mechanism on price to a great extent determines the amount of food which peoples can afford. The effect of marketing process is assessed by the ability of the market to create time, place form and possession utility. Since rapid preservation and transport became available in the 19th to 21st century fish markets can technically be established at any place. In marketing, fish passes through various market participant and exchange pounds before they reach the final consumer. These market intermediaries are the whole sellers and retailers. Both play important role in the marketing system.

Objectives of the Study

The broad objective of the study is to determine the economics of fish marketing in Abakaliki, Ebonyi state.

The specific objectives are to:

1. Describe the socio-economic characteristics of fish marketers in the study area.
2. Identify the different species of fish in Abakaliki markets.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Study Area

Abakaliki urban, Ebonyi state is the study area. It consists of two local government areas, Abakaliki and Ebonyi local government area. Abakaliki urban is the capital of Ebonyi state, the area is bounded in the east by Izzi local government area in the West by Ezza North and Ezza South local government areas and in the South by Cross River/Benue State. Abakaliki lies between longitude 7.30° and 8.30° East and latitudes 5.40° and 6.45° North. The main occupation of the people is farming. Geopolitically, Abakaliki urban belongs to the south-east zone but lies entirely in the cross river plains. Ebonyi State population based on the 1991 population census was estimated at 1,523,000 people, which is about 2% of Nigeria's total population of 88,992,220 people in 1991. About 60% of the total population of Ebonyi State is made up of rural dwellers, while the urban population is estimated at about 40%. Abakaliki urban has many markets where fish are sold, it include; Abakpa market, Ekeaba market, Nkwegu market, Kpirikpiri market, Nwokpo market, Rice mill market, Ishieke market and other markets within the Abakaliki municipality.

Sampling Techniques

Multi-stage sampling technique was employed in sampling the respondents for the study. It is a sampling method in which the population is divided into a number of groups or primary stages from which samples are drawn; these are then divided into groups or secondary stages from which samples are drawn, and so on. It is a type of surveys conducted face to face, using multi stage sampling methodology. The sampling was based on the number of the contact fish sellers within Abakaliki urban in Ebonyi state.

Stage 1.

Seven major markets noted for fish markets within Abakaliki urban were selected by purposive sampling technique.

Stage 2. Contact fish sellers in the selected market were identified and ten (10) Fish sellers from each market were randomly select. A sample size of seventy (70) respondents were selected and interviewed.

Data Collection

Primary data collection procedure was used for the study; the primary data was collected by the use of oral interview technique. The oral interviews technique was adopted because most of the fish sellers have low level of education and some did not attend school. The following questions was asked and answered, the name of the market, sex, marital status, age, educational qualification, household size, annual income, nature of the occupation, years of experience, types of fish sales, source of fish,

Analytical Techniques

A number of analytical tools were employed in data analysis. Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequency and percentages. Specifically, descriptive statistics such as table, frequency and percentages was use to analyzed objectives (1) and (2)

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**Socio-Economic Characteristics of Fish Marketers**

Socio-economic characteristics of fish marketers were analyzed in sections 4.1 thus: sex, marital status, Age, Educational qualification, house hold size and annual income.

Table 1: The percentage distribution of the respondent according to socio-economic characteristics.

| Socio-economic | Category | Respondent | Percentage (%) |
|---------------------------|---------------------|-------------------|-----------------------|
| Sex | Male | 7 | 10 |
| | Female | 63 | 90 |
| Total | | 70 | 100 |
| Marital status | Single | 19 | 27.14 |
| | Married | 33 | 47.14 |
| | Widow | 15 | 21.43 |
| | Divorce | 1 | 1.43 |
| | Separated | 2 | 2.86 |
| Total | | 70 | 100 |
| Age | 15-20 | 6 | 8.57 |
| | 21-25 | 14 | 20 |
| | 26-30 | 21 | 30 |
| | Above 30 | 29 | 41.43 |
| Total | | 70 | 100 |
| Educational Qualification | No formal education | 3 | 4.29 |
| | Primary | 12 | 17.14 |
| | Secondary | 38 | 54.29 |
| | Tertiary | 17 | 24.29 |
| Total | | 70 | 100 |
| Household size | 1-3 | 5 | 7.14 |
| | 4-6 | 26 | 37.14 |
| | 7-9 | 28 | 44.29 |
| | Above 10 | 8 | 11.43 |
| Total | | 70 | 100 |
| Annual income | 100,000-500,000 | 9 | 12.86 |
| | 500,000-1,000,000 | 15 | 21.43 |
| | 1,000,000-5,000,000 | 35 | 50 |
| | Above 5,000,000 | 11 | 15.71 |
| Total | | 70 | 100 |

Source: Field survey, 2014.

Sex: From table 1, the data collected reviewed that fish marketing business is majored by female gender where 90% of the 70 respondents used for this research are female, only 10% are male. This shows that fish marketers in Abakaliki urban are mostly female with very few male that are engaged in marketing.

Marital Status: The data collected reviewed that most people involved in fish marketing are married women with 47.14% of them selling fish, it is followed by single male and female with 27.14% and widows with 21.43% while it is only 2.86% and 1.43% for separated couples and Divorce couple that goes out to sell fish in order to make end meet.

Age: From table 1 the data collected shows that people involved in fish marketing in Abakaliki urban are mostly matured people above 30 years (41.43%), followed by youths which are still struggling and aging 26-30 years (30%), others are younger youths of age 21.25 years (20%) and ordinary school girls/boys that goes to help their parents within the age range of 15-20 years (8.57%).

Educational Qualification: The analysis in table 1 shows that the greater people involved in fish marketing are people who have attempted secondary school levels (54.29%), followed with people that have finished tertiary institution and people who are still in school that do fish marketing as a means to achieve their aims (24.29%), followed by people that attempted primary school and people who has no formal education which is 17.14% and 4.29% respectively.

Household Size: From the result collected it was observed that majority of people marketing fish has a household size range of 7-9 (44.29%), followed by household size of range 4-6 (36-14%). Other household sizes that go to sell fish within Abakaliki Urban are of the range above 10 (11.43%). The ranges of 1-3 (7.14%) are found among the single people who live with the parents or their siblings.

Annual Income: Fish marketing is a profiting business with most fish marketers within Abakaliki Urban of the annual income between ₦1,000,000 to ₦5,000,000 with 5% of the total respondents, followed by people that gain annual income of ₦500,000-1,000,000 (21.43%), some of them gain annual income above ₦5,000,000 (15.71%) and it is only few of them with annual income of ₦100,000-500,000 (12.86%). This shows that majority of fish marketer's gains annual income of ₦1,000,000-5,000,000 per annum.

Different Species of Fish Sold in Abakaliki Municipality

The different species of fishes sold in Abakaliki are presented in Table 2 and figures.

Table 2: The percentage distribution of the different species of fish sold in Abakaliki urban.

| Titles | Category | Respondents | Percentage |
|----------------------|--|--------------------|-------------------|
| Types of fishes sold | Mackerel (<i>Trachurus japonicus</i>) | 23 | 21.10% |
| | Sardine (<i>Sardinella aurita</i>) | 15 | 13.76% |
| | Scomber (<i>Scomber Japonctatus</i>) | 31 | 28.44% |
| | Catfish (<i>Clarias gariepinus</i>) | 7 | 6.42% |
| | Mangala (Bargi mangala) | 4 | 3.67% |
| | Stock fish (<i>Gadus morhua</i>) | 6 | 5.50% |
| | Bonga (<i>Ethmalosa fimbriata</i>) | 2 | 1.83% |
| | Electric fish (<i>Malapterurus electricus</i>) | 5 | 4.59% |
| | Spotted fish | 16 | 14.68% |
| Total | | 109 | 100 |
| The form it is sold | Smoked | 11 | 15.71% |
| | Fresh | 34 | 48.57% |
| | Dry | 16 | 22.86% |
| | Both | 9 | 12.86% |
| | Total | | 70 |
| Sources of fish sold | Fishermen | 12 | 17.14% |
| | Wholesaler | 43 | 61.43% |
| | Retailer | 15 | 21.43% |
| | Total | | 70 |
| Sources of fund | Personal savings | 44 | 62.86% |
| | Friends and relations | 16 | 22.86% |
| | Banks | 3 | 4.29% |
| | Cooperatives | 7 | 10.00% |
| | Total | | 70 |

Source: Field survey, 2014.

Types of fishes sold: There are different varieties of fish sold within the study area, based on that different choices arise. The data generated revealed that major species of fish demanded mostly by the consumer are scomber (*Scomber japonctatus*) (28.44%), followed by mackerel (*Trachurus japonicus*) (21.10%). Other species are spotted fish (14.68%), sardine (*Sardinella aurita*) (13.76%), catfish (*Clarias gariepinus*) (6.42%). Other species that are demanded though at low rate because of cost are stock fish (5.50%), Electric fish (*Malapterurus electricus*) (4.59%), Mangala (3.67%) and Bonga (*Ethmalosa fimbriata*) (1.83%).

The form it is sold: From Table 2, the data obtain shows that fish marketers within Abakaliki Urban sales their products in different form ranging from fresh, smoked, dry and those that sales both fresh and smoked fish. The result presented in Table 2 shows that majority of fish marketers within the study area sale fishes in fresh form (48.57%).

Source of fish sold: The data generated and presented in Table 2 reveal that there are three sources of fish found in Abakaliki market which includes the fisherman (17.14%), wholesaler (61.43%) and Retailer (21.43%). From the result it shows that majority of fish marketers in Abakaliki urban got their fish from wholesalers which is usually in a cold room.

Source of Fund: The data generated and presented in Table 2 shows that the major source of fund for fish marketers within the study area are from their personal savings (62.86%), it is few of them that source their fund from friends and relatives (22.86%), Banks (4.29%) and cooperatives (10.00%).

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Summary

This study analyzed the economics of fish marketing in Abakaliki urban of Ebonyi State. The data for the study was collected using structured questionnaire and analyzed, using descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptively, objective 1 and 2 were analyzed using tables and percentages. Objective 3 were analyzed using cost and return to determine the gross margin of marketers and to determine the efficiencies of marketing different varieties of fishes in Abakaliki urban.

From the data collected and analyzed, the study shows that the majority of fish marketers in the study area are female (90%) and they mainly married women (47.14%). The data also revealed that most of these women that are fish marketers in the study area are above 30 years of age with the highest percentage of 41.43% and majority of them attempted secondary school (54.29%) with house hold size of 7-9 (44.29%). The data also shows that most fish marketers within the study area has an annual income between ₦1,000,000-5,000,000 (50%).

Moreover, the result collected and analyzed indicated that most fish marketers within Abakaliki Urban markets more than one species of fish although majority of them market Scomber (*Scomber japonctatus*) (28.44%) and 48.57% of the marketers deals with fresh fish.

The study also revealed that their major source of fish is wholesale/cold room (61.43%) and they source of the money use for the business from their personal saving (62.86%). Since the initial

capital is small. The data collected and analyzed shows that fish marketing is a lucrative business in the study area. Although smoked scomber (*Scomber japonctatus*) marketing in the area has the highest net profit of ₦4,093,600 followed by those marketing dry electric fish (*Malapterurus electricus*) of net profit ₦3,796,100. The result also shows that dry Bonga (*Ethmalosa fimbriata*) has the least net profit of ₦110,130 followed by those marketing dried catfish (*Clarias gariepinus*) with net profit of ₦133,600.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it has been observed that fish marketing in Abakaliki urban is a lucrative venture. Although, fishes are marketed in different forms either as fresh, smoked or dried fish. The research revealed that smoked Scomber (*Scomber japonctatus*) is more lucrative than every other kinds/forms of fish sold in the study area. Therefore marketing of Scomber (*Scomber japonctatus*) either as fresh or smoked is more profitable than other fishes as attested by the majority of the respondents.

Recommendations

Based on the research findings, the following policy recommendations are therefore proffered. Fish marketers should form a co-operative society to enable them obtain loan from financial institutions so as to expand their marketing activities. This is because in the process of data collection it was discovered that the majority of the fish marketers source their fund from their personal savings which is highly limited. Expanding the trading capital will enable the traders handle more bulk and consequently, more profit will be derived. Government and private organization should encourage fish marketers by building an organized market and effecting free trade within the study area. Government should provide more cold rooms to enable fish marketer get fish for sale easier. Government should provide processing place/space to enable those who want to engage in fish smoking to cope.

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