
Effect of Market Information Dissemination and Financing Function of Channel Members On the Effective Marketing of Local Rice in Ebonyi State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT: *The effect information dissemination and financing functions of channel members in Ebonyi state has been assumed to be responsible for the retarding growth and reduced sustainability of rice production. Hence, the study seeks to find out the relationship between the channel members activities of market information dissemination and financing, and effective marketing of rice in Ebonyi State. Cross sectional survey design was adopted in the study on a total population size of 986 rice millers and rice traders from the two zoning block (Abakaliki and Afikpo) of the state. The Abakaliki block is made up of 285 registered rice millers and 340 rice traders. While the Afikpo block is made up of 156 registered rice millers and 205 rice traders. A sample size of 285 was obtained through the use of Taro Yamen Formular. The data collected through questionnaire was analysed with regression analysis and ANOVA analysis variance with the aid of statistical package for social science (SPSS) V.23. The findings revealed that (i) the activities of market information dissemination by channel members reduces the irregularity of rice supply, create consumers' awareness of new rice species, bridge time gab and package rice products results to effective marketing of rice, and (ii) the payment for rice products in advance and offering of soft loans to rice farmers without collateral helps to increase volume of local rice production in Ebonyi State. The implication of the findings shows that marketing channel members plays a vital role on the growth of rice production in the state and well the its exchange. The study recommends that state government should create favourable enabling environment for marketing channel members of rice in order achieve sustainability effective marketing of rice.*

KEYWORDS: information dissemination, financing, channel members, rice, effective marketing.

INTRODUCTION

Ebonyi State, since many years has been the centre of rice production in Nigeria. In fact, it is rare to see a household who does not cultivate rice in the state because of the topography of the state with vast swampy areas where rice is grown (Agwu, 2023). In addition to the presence of swampy areas, the technique of planting rice on upland is on the increase across the state. This is why the phrase “Abakaliki Rice” has gained popularity across the country. People from far and near usually come into the state to buy Abakaliki rice in large quantities for sale and consumption and before the creation of the state in October 1, 1996 by the late General Sani Abacha, Abakaliki had gained prominence as the city with the highest concentration of rice mills in West Africa. A rice mill industry located in the capital city; the Abakaliki Rice Mill complex had existed for decades before the creation of the state (Nwali and Anyalor, 2020).

In 2019, the Administration of Chief Martin Nwanchor established Rice Mill cluster in three Senatorial District of the State. The three modern rice processing clusters are located in Ikwo local government area (Ebonyi central), Ibooko in Izzi local government area (Ebonyi North) and Oso-Edda in Afikpo South Local Government Area (Ebonyi South) (Igwe, 2021). Abakaliki rice mill industry remained the headquarters of rice production in Ebonyi State, despite the establishment of these mill clusters. This development gave rise to the growth of Channel members which comprises rice farmers, millers and traders. Based on the development, various aspect of marketing functions become fully involved in rice marketing.

A key strategy adopted by marketing channel members to promote the sale of their products is proper information dissemination and provision of finance to members to expand their business (Abdullah, Mushtaq and Kouser, 2019). Marketing channel members who are organized association established by business groups to make ease, the sale of their products and ensure good returns, is involved in information dissemination and provision of funds to their members. Efficient market information provision can be shown to have positive benefits for farmers, traders and policymakers (Aduand Saliu 2020). Up-to-date, or current, market information enables farmers to negotiate with traders from a position of greater strength. It also facilitates spatial distribution of products from rural areas to urban areas and between urban markets by sending clear price signals from urban consumers to rural producers regarding quantities and varieties required (Iqbal, Munachi and Abbas, 2020).

Similarly, finance is pivotal in the commercialization of innovations. In agriculture, finance remains the bedrock for mechanisation – the purchase of machinery, the training to use machinery, the transportation of equipment and produce, the marketing of produce etc – so that it could be taken for granted the positive correlation between agricultural finance and actual agricultural production (Igwe, 2021). This paper therefore investigates the effects market information

dissemination and financing by channel members on the effective marketing on the effective marketing of local rice in Ebonyi State.

Effective marketing consist of attainment of marketing tasks, which are in four areas-product development, pricing/distribution and promotion for exchange of value. One of these marketing tasks distribution which is predominant activities in rice farming. The affective marketing of rice from distribution angle are the availability of rice at the right time and place in all markets in good condition and at affordable price for effective exchange relationship.

Statement of Problem

In marketing activities, adequate information dissemination and provision of channel member are critical step needed to enhance their performance. Proper information of rice business among Channel members in EbonyiState, provides them with details of market price, profit margins and agreed price for product sale. Similarly provision of fund in the form of loan and grants to channels help in the processing, bagging, transportation and distribution of rice for sale.

However, when there is inadequate information and fund for channel members, then they will lack requisite information on market trends as well as fund to carry out various. This may retard the growth of the business, reduce the sustainability of rice production and businesses among millers, farmers and retailers in Ebonyi State. In view of these perceived challenges that may arise due to lack of information and fund for channel members in business, this paper investigates the situation among channel members in Ebonyi State.

Objectives of the Study

The general objective of this paper was to evaluate the effect of information dissemination and financing by channel members on the effective marketing of local rice in Ebonyi State. The specific objectives to;

- i. Examine the effect of information dissemination on the effective marketing of local rice by channel members in Abakaliki and Afikpo Rice Mill clusters Ebonyi State
- ii. Investigate the effect of Financing on the effective marketing of local rice by channel members in Abakaliki and Afikpo Rice Mill clusters Ebonyi State

Hypotheses

H₀₁: Information dissemination has no significant effect on the effective marketing of local rice by channel members in Abakaliki and Afikpo Rice Mill clusters Ebonyi State

H₀₂: Financing has no significant effect on the effective marketing of local rice by channel members in Abakaliki and Afikpo Rice Mill clusters Ebonyi State

Significance of the Study

This paper provides the avenue to find out the effectiveness of information dissemination and provision of fund by channel members within Abakaliki and Afikpo Rice Mill Clusters in Ebonyi State. It equally help to determine how the provision of information and fund for channel members within Abakaliki and Afikpo Rice Mill Clusters in Ebonyi State help in rice business.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Marketing Channels

A group of independent businesses that work together to make a good or service accessible for use or consumption make up the marketing channels (Blanco, 2020). A marketing distribution channel, according to Boone and Kurtz in Uvwie (2022), is an organized system of marketing institutions and their connections that encourages the physical transfer of ownership of products and services from producer to consumer or end user. Marketing channels are a group of independent businesses involved in the process of making a good or service accessible for use or consumption by the consumer or business end user, according to Kotler and Armstrong in Okike (2021). The marketing channel, which is the series of middlemen or intermediaries through which products move from the producer or farmer to the consumer, promote activities of members. Kotler listed some of the main categories of distribution channels in Uvwie (2021). These are the channels for direct and indirect promotion. While there are other participants in the indirect marketing channels between the producers and the end users, in the direct channel, the producers offer directly to the consumers. According to Adeyeye and Dittoh (2020), there are two different kinds of routes used in Nigeria to distribute agricultural goods. The centralized and decentralized routes are as follows. A centralized channel occurs when agricultural products are purchased and sold simultaneously in sizable, central, and terminal markets. A centralized channel makes use of stabilized market facilities to buy the farm products from commissioned agents and brokers who serve as the farmer's selling representatives. A decentralized channel, however, buys the farm products directly from the farmer.

The markets in Ebonyi State that distribute agricultural product use both centralized and decentralized kinds of distribution channels. Produce is typically transported from neighboring villages to these central markets on a regular basis. Additionally, some products are offered for sale at the farms through decentralized networks (Adeyeye and Dittoh, 2020).

Rice Production in Ebonyi State

Rice production is the major farming activity by which Ebonyi State is known today across Nigeria. The growth of rice in Ebonyi State is most predicated to the availability of vast area of its landmass with swampy areas which is best suited for rice production. The vast number of framers

and households involved in rice production led to the establishment of many rice mills by private individuals in the state. Consequently, channel members union was established in the state.

The Ebonyi State Rice Mill industry, today boasts of over 400 mills where farmers both peasant and consistent ones process sand market rice to buyers who come from all over the country and beyond (Agwu, 2023). In 2019, Ebonyi State government found it necessary to sustain the comparative advantage it has over every other parts of the country when it established three modern rice processing clusters equipped with modern facilities across the three senatorial zones of the state (Nworie, 2023). The three modern rice processing clusters are located in Ikwo local government area (Ebonyi central), Ibooko in Izzi local government area (Ebonyi North) and Oso-Edda in Afikpo South Local Government Area (Ebonyi South). Abakaliki rice mill industry remained the headquarters of rice production in Ebonyi State, despite the establishment of these mill clusters (Inya, 2021).

Influence of Information and Financing on Marketing of Rice by Channel Members iEbonyi State

Information dissemination on market as well as the provision of fund for channel members to carry out their business are necessary for growth including rice business in Ebonyi State. Well-analysed historical market information enables farmers to make planting decisions in line with urban consumer demand, including those related to new crops (Kadidjia, 2020). It also permits traders to make better decisions regarding the viability of intra and, perhaps, inter-seasonal storage. Moreover, information of this type assists agricultural planners and researchers and can make an important contribution to our knowledge of urban food marketing systems (Mahmud, 2018).

Market performance is related to the functioning of arbitrage. Spatial arbitrage should equalise supply and demand at different market places until price differences are reduced to the level of transport costs (Okurutu, 2020). The higher the level of transaction costs between markets, the smaller the probability that exchange will take place between them. Links between markets thus become more likely as transaction costs decrease. When risk or the cost of identifying market outlets is reduced because of the availability of market information, transaction costs will go down (Hussain, 2018). Lower transaction costs thus influence quantities and prices in the market. For example, when transaction costs go down, supply to urban areas will increase and prices decrease. As a consequence, demand will increase. In rural areas, prices and quantities traded will also tend to increase. Urban consumers and rural producers will thus benefit from reduced transaction costs, while rural consumers will experience higher prices. Where there are producers closer to urban areas, these will obtain lower prices than hitherto.

The above considers the case when information promotes the flow of produce from rural to urban areas. Availability of market information will also encourage spatial arbitrage between two markets, especially in cases where information and transport costs are relatively low. If no trade

exists between two markets, both will clear supply and demand at their respective equilibrium prices. When price differences between the two are larger than the transaction costs, trade relations will be developed if there are no controls to inhibit exchange.

Similarly, finance is a key component in every business endeavour required for the establishment and running of the business. It is the life blood of any business. Funds are required for the purchase of capital equipment such as land and building, machinery and other fixed assets as well as working capital. It is worthy of note that with growth in activities in any business, comes increased financial needs and increased access to funding would facilitate expansion. The agric-business involving primarily food production, distribution, processing, marketing is not an exception. Hussain (2018), suggested that deepening financial intermediation may promote economic growth by mobilising more investments, and lifting returns to financial resources, which raises productivity. It is expected that provision of fund for channel members for rice business in Ebonyi State will deepen the activities in the industry and general more revenue.

METHODOLOGY

Design

Cross sectional survey design was adopted in this paper. This is justified by the diverse locations of the respondents used in the study

Area of Study

The area of study consists of Abakaliki and Afikpo rice mill clusters in Ebonyi State. The two rice mills clusters are used because there were host to many rice millers, farmers and traders in the state.

Population of the Study

The population of the study consists of rice millers/ and traders of the Abakaliki and Afikpo in the rice mill clusters. The traders consist of wholesalers and retailers. Table 1 below shows the distribution of the population.

Table 1: Population Distribution of the Study

Zones	Rice Millers (registered)	Traders	Total
Abakaliki	285	340	625
Afikpo	156	205	361
Total	441	545	986

Source: Secretariat of Rice Millers and Traders at Abakaliki and Afikpo Rice Mill Clusters.

Sample Size Determination

Given the population of the study, the researcher adopted the formula by Taro Yameni.

$$\text{Thus: } n = \frac{N}{1+N(e^2)}$$

Where

$$\begin{aligned} n &= \text{the sample size} \\ N &= \text{the population size} \\ e &= \text{Error estimated level of significance (0.05)} \\ 1 &= \text{Constant} \end{aligned}$$

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Therefore } n &= \frac{986}{1 + 986 (0.05)^2} \\ &= 285 \end{aligned}$$

Administration of Instruments

The instrument of the study is a five scale likert-type questionnaires. The questionnaires consist of 20 closed ended questions. The research instrument was measured on likert-scale of 5 to 1 as follows: strongly agree (5) agree (4) neutral (3) strongly disagree (2) disagree (1). The researcher visited the two major rice mill and markets in the two zones to administer the questionnaires to rice millers, traders and customers.

Analytical Techniques

Descriptive statistics were used to present the data while regression analysis and (ANOVA) Analysis of variance was used to test the hypotheses with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) v. 23.

RESULTS

4.1 Table 2: Analysis of Response Rate of General Respondents

S/NO.	Administered Questionnaire	Returned questionnaire	Percentage %
1	Completed and returned	278	98
2	Not returned	7	2
TOTAL	-	285	100

Source: Empirical Analysis, 2023

The rate of the return in table I, showed that there was an overwhelming interest in the issue investigated with 98% instrument correctly filled and returned while 2% were not returned. The returned instrument was used for analysis.

Demographic Data of Respondents

Three demographic variables are included in this study. They are: Gender and education Qualification. The results in the tables below represent distribution of sample individuals according to demographic variables.

Table 3: Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Sex	Frequency	Percentage
Male	200	78.9%
Female	78	28.1%
Educational Qualifications		
B.Sc	25	9.0%
OND/HND	45	16.2%
NCE	60	21.6%
SSCE	90	32.4%
FSLC	58	20.8%

Source: Empirical Analysis, 2023

Results in table 5 that male respondents account for 71.9% representing 200 of the total participants while 28.1% representing 78 participants were female. The result suggests that rice production, processing, and distribution in Ebonyi State in more of male activities. Also, result of the education qualification indicate that 9.0% of the respondents are B. Sc holders, NCE holders constitute 16.2%, OND make up 21.6%, SSCE represent 32.4% while FSLC make up 20.8%. The implication is that the respondents possess formal education hence have knowledge of transportation and warehousing of rice in the area of the study.

Channel member marketing information dysment and effective marking

Table 4: Relationship between Information dissemination by Channel Members and Effective Marketing of Local Rice

S/N	Statement	SA 5	A 4	N 3	SD 2	D 1	Total
1	effect of market information by channel members(millers, wholesalers, retailers) reduces the irregularity in the supply of rice	130 46.8%	114 41.0%	28 10.1%	6 2.2%	0 0.0%	278 100%
2	Market information by channel members(millers, wholesalers, retailers) encourage customer's awareness of new rice species	79 28.4%	133 47.8%	62 22.3%	4 1.4%	0 0.0%	278 100%
3	Adequate market information bridges the time gap	129 46.4%	113 40.6%	28 10.1%	4 1.4%	4 1.4%	278 100%
4	Market information by channel members(millers, wholesalers, retailers) promotes the activities of rice producers in terms of knowing the specie of rice in high demand	100 36.0%	130 46.8%	34 12.2%	12 4.3%	2 0.7%	278 100%
5	It helps in packaging of rice products for customers	143 51.4%	93 33.5%	26 9.4%	10 3.6%	2 0.7%	278 100%

Source: Empirical Analysis, 2023

Data in table 4 indicate that in item 1, an overwhelming number of the respondents (244) believed that effective information dissemination by channel members reduces the irregularity in the supply of rice. This number is far greater than 28 and 6 respondents respectively who were undecided or disagreed. The implication of this finding was that effective information dissemination by channel members reduces the irregularity in the supply of rice. In the second item, result showed that majority of the respondents (212) held that market information by channel members encourage customer's awareness on new rice species. The number that accepted were far higher than 62 and 4 respondents who were neutral or disagreed that market information by channel members encourage customer's awareness on new rice species, compared to 6 and 3 respondents who were neutral or disagreed. The implication of this finding is that market information by channel members encourage customer's awareness on new rice species.

Furthermore, result of item 3 indicate that greater number of the respondents (242) were of the opinion that adequate market information bridges the time gap compared to 28 who were neutral and 8 who were against. The implication is that adequate market information bridges the time gap. In item 4, higher number of the respondents, 230 held that market information by channel members promotes the activities of rice producers in terms of knowing the specie of rice in high demand, 34 were neutral while 14 disagreed. The implication of the finding was that market information by channel members promotes the activities of rice producers in terms of knowing the specie of rice in high demand. In item 5, greater number of the respondents (236) believed that dissemination of information by channel members helps in packaging of rice products for customers, 26 were neutral, while 12 rejected the claim. This result implies that dissemination of information by channel members helps in packaging of rice products for customers

Channel Member Financing and Effective Marketing of Rice

Table 5: Descriptive analysis of channel financing and the effective marketing

S/N	Statement	SA 5	A 4	N 3	SD 2	D 1	Total
6	Channel members (millers, wholesalers, retailers) pays for rice products in advance	100 36.0%	59 21.2%	34 12.2%	30 10.8%	55 19.8%	278 100%
7	Channel members (millers, wholesalers, retailers) provide improved rice seedlings	54 19.4%	108 38.8%	74 26.6%	21 7.6%	19 6.9%	278 100%
8	They offer soft loans to farmers without collateral	59 21.2%	116 41.7%	53 19.1%	33 11.9%	17 6.1%	278 100%
9	Channel financing by channel members (millers wholesalers, retailers) helps to increase the volume of local rice production	72 25.9%	92 33.1%	80 28.8%	19 6.8%	15 5.4%	278 100%

Source: Empirical Analysis, 2023

Table 5 showed the descriptive statistics of respondents' opinion on the effects channel financing on the effective marketing of local rice in Ebonyi State. In item 6, it was seen that greater number of the respondents (159) believed that channel members pays for rice products in advance. Lesser

numbers of 34 and 95 were either neutral or disagreed. The implication of the finding was that channel members pay for rice products in advance. In item 7, It was seen that 162 of the respondents believed that channel members provide improved rice seedlings. This was far greater than 74 who were neutral and 40 who disagreed. This implies that channel members provide improved rice seedlings. Furthermore, in item 8, higher number of the respondents (175) hold that channel members offer soft loans to farmers without collateral. This is far greater than 53 who were neutral and 50 who disagreed. This implies that channel members offer soft loans to farmers without collateral. In item 9, the table showed that 164 of the respondents held that channel financing by channel members help to increase the volume of local rice production. Those who believed were far greater than 80 who were undecided and 34 who rejected the view. The result implies that channel financing by channel members (millers wholesalers, retailers) helps to increase the volume of local rice production

Test of Hypotheses

Decision Rule

If the p-value (calculated value) is greater than ($>$) the defined level of significance (critical value), null hypotheses (H_0) shall be accepted, when it is less than the critical value ($<$) accept the alternative hypotheses (H_a) (Saunders et al., 2009). Therefore, the condition for accepting the alternative hypothesis (H_a) and for the level of significance (p-value) of 0.05 for this study is stated above. If, however, the p-value is less than 0.05 is the condition for the rejection of the null hypotheses (H_0).

Hypothesis one

H_{01} : Marketing Information dissemination by channel member has no significant effect on the marketing of local rice in Ebonyi State.

Table 6: **Regression Analysis**

Statistics	Values
R	0.947
R ²	0.896
AR ²	0.862
error estimate	22.6591
R. sum of square	13322.500
Residual sum of squares	1540.300
F-value	25.948
Dw	1.552
C	-54.700
Coeff.	36.500
P-value	0.015

Source: Author's compilation from results of SPSS software, V. 23.

From the above table, since the significance value (p-value) of 0.015 is less than 0.05, the model is statically significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis is accepted. It was therefore concluded that market information dissemination has significant effect on the effective marketing of local rice in Ebonyi State

Hypothesis two

H₀₂: Channel financing does not play any significant role on the marketing of local rice in EbonyiState

Table 7: Regression Result

Statistics	Values
R	0.675
R ²	0.456
AR ²	0.275
error estimate	23.7283
R. sum of square	1416.100
Residual sum of squares	1689.100
F-value	2.515
Dw	1.446
C	19.900
Coeff.	11.900
P- value	0.211

Source: Author's compilation from results of SSPS software, V. 23.

From the above table, since the significance value (p-value) of 0.211 is more than 0.05, the model is not statically significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis is accepted and the alternative hypothesis is rejected. We therefore conclude that channel financing does not play any significant role on the marketing of local rice in Ebonyi State.

DISCUSSION

The result of the test of hypothesis one indicate that there is a very strong relationship betweenmarket information distribution has a substantial impact on the effective marketing of local rice in Ebonyi State. The model's significance value (p-value) of 0.015 is less than 0.05.This is in line with the findings of Ukoma (2021) who held that access to market information has is good for marketing of agriculture produce among channel members. The significance values of .005 for the informal market choice and .000 for the formal market choice imply that there is enough evidence to support that an increase in the availability of market information results in an increase in both informal and formal market participation. The larger values in odds ratios show that households are likely to increase participation in both informal and formal markets with the availability of market information. Eke (2020) added that consumers' acceptability of local rice brands in Nigeria, there is the need for improvements in marketing

functions that enhance the promotion and distribution of local rice brands. The findings of Nwele (2016) reveal that market information on rice was insufficient. Price fluctuations in existing markets were accounted for by this lack of market knowledge. As a result, some customers sell rice at a greater price than their counterparts in other markets with the same amount and quality.

In hypothesis two, it was found that channel financing does not play any significant role on the effective marketing of local rice in Ebonyi State since the importance value (p-value) of $0.211 > 0.05$, the model is not statistically significant. This is in line with the findings of Tinsley (2012) that the value chain for rice is similar to the value chain for most commodities operating in financially suppressed economies common to most developing countries such as Nigeria. It is composed of a multitude of private family enterprises that undertake the various services needed to produce, process, and finally market rice, with associated links. While the system is highly fragmented, it is a business model that minimizes costs and thus has limited profit margins. Nwele, (2016) added that the marketing channel for rice in Ebonyi State is one which involved few market intermediaries before the product finally gets to the consumers. The lack of feeder and all-season roads in the research area was blamed for insufficient mobility and high transportation costs. Particular commercial vehicles only ply some areas of the study area on market days.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

This paper is an evaluation of the effectiveness of marketing information dissemination and channel financing on the effective marketing of local rice in Ebonyi State. Findings indicate that market information dissemination has significant effect on the effective marketing of local rice in Ebonyi State while channel financing does not play any significant role on the effective marketing of local rice in Ebonyi State. It is therefore concluded that for effective marketing of locally produced rice in Ebonyi State, proper information rather than financing is necessary.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, it was recommended that;

- i. There is need for Abakaliki and Afikpo rice mill to create channel members for customer and traders' awareness of new rice species and government should as well create market information to Nigerians on rice herbicides and new technological development to the production of local rice. Thus, market information is very essential since it would help to choose relevant places, time and prices to buy and sell efficiently.
- ii. Financing is indispensable functions of the distribution channel. Local rice marketing needs financing to connect and transact with channel members to encourage buying in cash from the farmers or pays cash in advance to the farmers which provides them with economic empowerment to engage continuous production activities (farming) thus resulting to increase in volume of local rice production.

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