

Agricultural Marketing and Consumer Buying Behaviour: A Study of Members of Agricultural Cooperative in Idemili South Local Government Area of Anambra State

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Abstract: This study investigates the impact of agricultural marketing on consumer buying behaviour among members of agricultural cooperative in Idemili South Local Government Area of Anambra State, Nigeria. The research focuses on key marketing factors—freshness of foodstuffs, price, quality, variety, packaging, and non-seasonal availability—as independent variables, with consumer buying behaviour serving as the dependent variable. Using a sample size of 271 respondents, descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) were employed to assess the central tendencies and variability in consumer responses. The chi-square statistic was applied to examine the relationship between the independent variables and consumer buying behaviour. Results indicate that freshness, quality, and price significantly influence consumer decisions, while non-seasonal availability and variety of foodstuffs showed moderate effects. Packaging had a comparatively low impact on consumer behaviour. These findings highlight the importance of strategic agricultural marketing to enhance consumer satisfaction and drive higher purchase rates, suggesting that cooperative farmers should focus on improving the quality, freshness, and pricing strategies of their products. The study provides critical insights for policymakers and cooperative leaders in improving marketing strategies to align with consumer preferences, ultimately fostering sustainable agricultural practices and increased income for cooperative farmers.

Keywords: Agricultural Marketing, freshness of food stuffs, price of food stuffs, quality of food stuffs, variety of food stuffs, packaging of food stuffs, non-seasonal availability of food stuffs, consumers buying behaviour.

1. INTRODUCTION

Agricultural marketing plays a critical role in the development of rural economies, especially in Nigeria, where the majority of the population relies on agriculture as a primary source of income. The effectiveness of agricultural marketing influences not only the profitability of farmers but also the availability and accessibility of food for consumers (Adetunji, 2021). Agricultural cooperatives in Nigeria, particularly in rural areas, have been instrumental in bridging the gap between smallholder farmers and the market, offering better access to resources and more robust marketing strategies. However, the link between effective marketing and consumer buying behaviour remains under-explored, particularly among cooperative farmers, who rely heavily on consumer patronage for sustained income (Olayiwola, 2022). This study seeks to fill this gap by examining how key marketing variables such as freshness, price, quality, variety, packaging, and non-seasonal availability of foodstuffs affect consumer buying behaviour in agricultural cooperatives in Idemili South Local Government Area, Anambra State.

The growing importance of consumer satisfaction and demand-driven markets necessitates that agricultural cooperatives adopt more efficient marketing strategies to remain competitive. Consumer preferences today are influenced by a multitude of factors, including the quality and variety of foodstuffs, pricing, and packaging, all of which affect purchasing decisions (Adekoya & Oladimeji, 2021). Freshness, in particular, has been highlighted as a key determinant of consumer buying behaviour, with consumers placing a high premium on perishable food items that are sourced fresh from local farmers (Okeke, 2022). This has significant implications for agricultural cooperatives, which must ensure that their marketing strategies align with these consumer expectations to maintain competitiveness in the market. The ability to provide consistent quality and freshness, along with competitive pricing and attractive packaging, is crucial in influencing consumer choices. Consumer behaviour is defined as the psychological, social, and economic processes that influence an individual's decision to purchase goods or services. In the context of agricultural products, consumer buying behaviour is particularly complex, as it is affected by factors such as product availability, price, and perceived quality (Olaoye & Olaniyi, 2023). The relationship between agricultural marketing and consumer buying behaviour has been a subject of interest in recent studies, with researchers arguing that effective marketing strategies are essential for enhancing consumer satisfaction and loyalty. In Nigeria, where consumers are increasingly discerning in their food purchases, cooperative farmers must understand these behavioural patterns to tailor their products to meet consumer demand (Nwosu & Eze, 2021). This study builds on existing literature by exploring how agricultural marketing variables affect consumer choices in a local context, focusing on cooperative farmers in Idemili South Local Government Area.

The economic and social importance of agricultural cooperatives in rural areas cannot be overemphasized. Cooperatives provide smallholder farmers with access to better markets, financial resources, and shared services that are otherwise difficult to obtain individually (Obboh & Aderemi, 2023). In Anambra State, agricultural cooperatives have been key players in improving the livelihoods of farmers by facilitating the marketing of their products, reducing post-harvest losses, and offering platforms for collective bargaining (Oluwaseyi, 2022). Despite these advantages, many cooperatives face challenges in effectively marketing their products due to inadequate infrastructure, lack of access to market information, and limited knowledge of consumer preferences. These challenges underscore the need for cooperative farmers to adopt more strategic approaches to marketing that take into account factors such as product freshness, quality, variety, and packaging to attract and retain consumers. In Nigeria, agricultural marketing has evolved significantly over the years, with both public and private sector interventions aimed at improving market access for farmers. However, despite these efforts, there are still gaps in how agricultural products are marketed, particularly in rural areas where cooperatives operate (Afolabi, 2021). The traditional methods of selling agricultural produce—such as open markets and middlemen—often result in farmers receiving low prices for their products and limited market reach (Ayodele & Nwankwo, 2022). With the rising demand for fresh,

high-quality, and conveniently packaged foodstuffs, cooperative farmers must move beyond traditional marketing practices to more modern approaches that better cater to consumer preferences. This study seeks to explore how effective agricultural marketing strategies can be developed and implemented to meet these changing consumer demands, with a particular focus on the role of cooperatives in the rural agricultural economy of Idemili South.

Research on consumer buying behaviour in the context of agricultural products has emphasized the importance of understanding the factors that drive consumer decisions. Recent studies have shown that freshness and quality are paramount for consumers when purchasing foodstuffs, particularly perishable items such as fruits and vegetables (Ibe & Okafor, 2023). Price is another critical factor, with consumers often weighing the cost of agricultural products against their perceived value. However, factors such as packaging and non-seasonal availability are becoming increasingly important as consumers seek convenience and consistent access to foodstuffs year-round (Onyeka, 2023). This study will examine these factors in detail, analyzing how they influence consumer buying behaviour and providing recommendations for cooperative farmers to enhance their marketing strategies. The effectiveness of agricultural marketing strategies has a direct impact on consumer buying behaviour, which in turn affects the livelihoods of cooperative farmers in Nigeria. This study aims to provide insights into how agricultural cooperatives in Idemili South Local Government Area can optimize their marketing efforts to align with consumer preferences, thereby improving their market share and income. By analyzing key marketing variables such as freshness, price, quality, variety, packaging, and non-seasonal availability, the study will offer practical recommendations for cooperative farmers on how to better meet consumer expectations and remain competitive in the evolving agricultural market.

Statement of the Problem

The rising price of food stuff in the market has affected the levels of patronage of most food crops in the market, thus affect the production capacity of farmers for most agricultural commodity in the market. It is believed that the nation is experiencing a down trend in the tonnage of food crops produced. The land used for cultivation is decreasing. This problem could be attributed to poor marketing system which is manifested in farmers receiving less for much work and middlemen receiving much for less work done and consumer paying much for little food items. Agricultural cooperatives in Nigeria, particularly in rural areas like Idemili South Local Government Area of Anambra State, face significant challenges in effectively marketing their produce. Despite the potential benefits of cooperatives, many smallholder farmers struggle with poor market access, inadequate marketing strategies, and a lack of understanding of consumer preferences, all of which limit their income and overall success. Specifically, factors such as the freshness, price, quality, variety, packaging, and non-seasonal availability of foodstuffs are critical in influencing consumer buying behaviour, but cooperative farmers often lack the resources and knowledge to optimize these variables. Consumers in modern agricultural markets are becoming increasingly discerning, demanding higher quality, better-packaged, and fresher foodstuffs that meet their expectations in terms of price and availability. Unfortunately, many cooperative farmers are still reliant on traditional marketing methods that do not fully align with these evolving consumer preferences, resulting in lost sales opportunities and reduced competitiveness. The inability of cooperative farmers to effectively cater to consumer needs has not only impacted their profitability but also the sustainability of the agricultural sector in the region. This issue is exacerbated by limited access to market information, poor infrastructure, and the absence of effective strategies to maintain product quality and freshness throughout the supply chain.

Furthermore, there is a gap in the understanding of how specific agricultural marketing variables directly influence consumer buying decisions, particularly in the context of cooperative farming. While several studies have been conducted on agricultural marketing in Nigeria, few have focused on how these factors affect consumer behaviour within cooperative settings in rural areas. Therefore, this study seeks to address

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the problem of ineffective agricultural marketing strategies among cooperative farmers in Idemili South Local Government Area, with a particular focus on how freshness, price, quality, variety, packaging, and non-seasonal availability of foodstuffs impact consumer buying behaviour. Addressing these issues is crucial for improving the income and sustainability of cooperative farmers, as well as for ensuring a stable supply of quality agricultural products to the local market. This study is therefore necessitated to examine agricultural marketing and consumer buying behaviour: A study of members of agricultural cooperative in Idemili South Local Government Area of Anambra State

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to examine agricultural marketing and consumer buying behaviour among members of agricultural cooperative in Idemili South Local Government Area of Anambra State. Specifically, the study intends to:

1. Ascertain the effect of freshness of food stuffs on consumers buying behaviour in Idemili South Local Government Area of Anambra State.
2. Find out the influence of price of food stuffs on consumers buying behaviour in Idemili South Local Government Area of Anambra State.
3. Determine the influence of quality of food stuffs on consumers buying behaviour in Idemili South Local Government Area of Anambra State.
4. Determine the effect of variety of food stuffs on consumers buying behaviour in Idemili South Local Government Area of Anambra State.
5. Determine the influence of packaging of food stuffs on consumers buying behaviour in Idemili South Local Government Area of Anambra State.
6. Determine the effect of non-seasonal availability of food stuffs on consumers buying behaviour in Idemili South Local Government Area of Anambra State.

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated and tested in the study:

Hypothesis One

H₀₁: Freshness of food stuffs has no significant influence on consumers buying behaviour in Idemili South Local Government Area of Anambra State.

Hypothesis Two

H₀₂: Price of food stuffs has no significant influence on consumers buying behaviour in Idemili South Local Government Area of Anambra State.

Hypothesis Three

H₀₃: Quality of food stuffs has no significant influence on consumers buying behaviour in Idemili South Local Government Area of Anambra State.

Hypothesis Four

H₀₄: Varieties of food stuffs has no significant influence on consumers buying behaviour in Idemili South Local Government Area of Anambra State.

Hypothesis Five

H₀₅: Packaging of food stuffs has no significant influence on consumers buying behaviour in Idemili South

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Local Government Area of Anambra State.

Hypothesis Six

H₀₆: Non-seasonal availability of food stuffs has no significant influence on consumers buying behaviour in Idemili South Local Government Area of Anambra State.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is grounded in the **Consumer Behaviour Theory**, which seeks to understand how individuals make decisions to purchase goods and services. The theory, extensively developed by several economists and psychologists, is based on the idea that consumers make purchasing decisions based on a combination of psychological, social, and economic factors. One of the key proponents of this theory is **John Howard**, who, along with Jagdish Sheth, developed the **Howard-Sheth Model of Buyer Behavior** in 1969. This model helps explain how consumers process information, evaluate alternatives, and make buying decisions based on various stimuli from the environment, such as marketing efforts, product attributes, and personal experiences.

Assumptions of the Consumer Behaviour Theory

The theory makes several assumptions about how consumers behave and make decisions:

1. **Rational Decision-Making:** The theory assumes that consumers are rational actors who seek to maximize their utility or satisfaction when making purchasing decisions. They are thought to evaluate the costs and benefits of different options before making a choice.
2. **Influence of External Factors:** The theory assumes that consumer choices are influenced by external factors, such as product quality, pricing, packaging, and marketing. These factors create stimuli that affect consumer perceptions and decisions.
3. **Information Processing:** It is assumed that consumers have access to information about the products they are considering and that they process this information to make informed decisions.
4. **Sequential Decision-Making:** The theory suggests that consumer decision-making is a sequential process. Consumers begin by recognizing a need, followed by searching for information, evaluating alternatives, making a decision, and post-purchase evaluation.

Applications of Consumer Behaviour Theory to the Study

The Consumer Behaviour Theory is highly relevant to the current study on effective agricultural marketing and consumer buying behaviour among agricultural cooperative farmers in Idemili South Local Government Area of Anambra State, Nigeria. In the context of this research, the following applications of the theory are explored:

1. **Influence of Marketing Variables:** The theory underscores the importance of external factors, such as product quality, freshness, price, and packaging, in shaping consumer buying decisions. In this study, these variables are the key independent factors that influence consumer behaviour. The theory provides a framework to understand how these marketing elements can act as stimuli that affect consumer perceptions of agricultural products offered by cooperative farmers. For instance, freshness and quality are crucial in consumers' decision-making processes, as these factors directly impact the perceived value and utility of agricultural products.
2. **Rational Decision-Making:** According to the theory, consumers make rational decisions based on the information available to them. In the context of agricultural cooperatives, the rational decision-making assumption is applied to understand how consumers evaluate the benefits of purchasing foodstuffs based on freshness, price, packaging, and availability. By analyzing these variables, the study seeks to identify the factors that most strongly influence consumer satisfaction and purchasing choices.

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3. **Information Processing and Marketing:** The theory's assumption that consumers process available information to make informed choices aligns with the need for cooperative farmers to provide transparent and accurate product information. Agricultural products that are well-marketed, with clear information about freshness, quality, and price, are more likely to influence consumer behaviour positively. In this regard, the study applies the theory by examining how effectively agricultural cooperatives communicate product attributes and how this influences buying behaviour.
4. **Sequential Decision-Making:** The consumer decision-making process described by the theory can be observed in the context of agricultural products. Consumers start by identifying a need for foodstuffs, then evaluate various options based on factors such as freshness and price, before making a purchase. Post-purchase evaluation, such as satisfaction with the quality or freshness of the product, may determine whether the consumer continues to buy from the cooperative farmers. This sequential process offers a framework for understanding how agricultural marketing strategies can influence different stages of consumer decision-making.
5. **Consumer Preferences and Cooperative Marketing:** The theory's emphasis on understanding consumer preferences is essential for agricultural cooperatives. As the study focuses on how marketing strategies—such as providing fresh, high-quality, and competitively priced products—can influence consumer choices, the theory helps to highlight the need for cooperative farmers to tailor their marketing efforts to meet consumer demands. By doing so, they can increase consumer loyalty, improve their market share, and ultimately enhance their profitability.

The Consumer Behaviour Theory, particularly as explained by Howard and Sheth, provides a comprehensive framework for analyzing how agricultural marketing variables influence consumer buying behaviour in Idemili South Local Government Area. By applying the assumptions of rational decision-making, information processing, and the influence of external factors, this study explores how cooperative farmers can optimize their marketing strategies to better align with consumer preferences. The theory's focus on understanding the sequential nature of consumer decision-making also provides a structured approach for examining how agricultural marketing strategies can impact different stages of the consumer buying process. Ultimately, the application of this theory will help agricultural cooperatives in the region to develop more effective marketing practices that lead to increased sales, customer satisfaction, and sustainable farming livelihoods.

3. METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study is a descriptive survey which aims to ascertain the effect of effective agricultural marketing on consumer behaviour particularly among members of agricultural cooperative farmers in Idemili South Local Government Area of Anambra State. Survey research according to Okeke, Olise and Eze (2008) consists of asking questions, collecting and analyzing data from a supposedly representative members of the population at a single point in time with a view to determine the current station of that population with respect to one or more variable under investigation.

Area of Study

The area of this study is Idemili South Local Government Area of Anambra state. Idemili South is a Local Government Area in Anambra State, South-East Nigeria. Towns that make up the local government are Akwaukwu, Alor, Awka-Etiti, Nnobi, Nnokwa, Oba, Ojoto. Idemili South Local Government is one out of the 21 Local Government Areas that make up Anambra State. It was created out of old Idemili Local Government in 1996 with the headquarters at Ojoto. It derives its name from Idemili river which has its

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source at Nri through Nnobi, Obosi and emptied in the Niger River. Idemili South Local Government consists of seven communities namely Akwu-Ukwu, Alor, Awka-Etiti, Nnobi, Oba and Ojoto.

Idemili South is geographically bounded in the North by Idemili North Local Government area, in the West is Ogbaru Local Government Area, in the South by Ekwusigo Local Government Area while by East is Nnewi North Local Government and Anaocha Local Government. The inhabitants of Idemili South Local Government are predominantly traders and farmers. They speak common languages known as Igbo and English Languages (Anambraa, 2012).

Population of the Study

The population of this study is made up of all the members of the registered Cooperative societies in Idemili South Local Government Areas. Idemili South Local Government Area has 142 registered cooperative societies. Out of the 142 registered cooperative 57 of them are active with membership strength of 1767. Two functional cooperative societies each was selected from the communities that make up Idemili South L.G.A.

Sample Size and Sampling Technique

To determine the sample size for the study, two cooperative societies were randomly selected from each of the six communities that make up Idemili South Local Government Area. The decision to select only two cooperative societies were largely purposive to avoid bias in data sampling. The 12 cooperative societies selected had a membership strength of 287 which serves as the sample size for this study.

Data Collection

The researcher explored two sources of data which are the primary and secondary data.

Primary Data: the primary data was obtained from members of the selected Cooperative Societies through the use of a structured questionnaire that was administered them.

Secondary Data: The secondary data was obtained from test books, journals, and other papers and materials at the disposal of the researcher.

Data Collection Instrument

The researcher developed questionnaire which was used to collect data for the study. The questionnaire was titled of effective agricultural marketing and consumer behaviour: A study of members of agricultural cooperative farmers in Idemili South Local Government Area of Anambra State. The questionnaire has two sections. Section A and Section B. Section A sought information on socio-economic background of respondents. Section B was made up of items relating to the effective agricultural marketing and consumer behaviour: A study of members of agricultural cooperative in Idemili South Local Government Area of Anambra State. It sought the members' perception on effective agricultural marketing and consumer behaviour in Idemili South Local Government Area of Anambra State.

Administration of Questionnaire

The instrument was however administered to the respondents with the assistance of the Divisional Cooperative Officer in the selected L.G.A who is also knowledgeable in the field of cooperative. The administration and collection of the instrument took the researcher a period of about four (3) weeks. Out of the 287 questionnaires that were administered to the respondents only 271 were dully completed and returned. The number returned was used for the analysis. The ones not completed were discarded.

Method of Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) chi-square statistics were used to analyze the data collected in respect of the research questions. The mean was used to give answer to the research questions.

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Standard deviation was used to establish the harmony in the mean ratings among the respondents.

The rating is as follows:

Strongly Agree	(SA)	5 points
Agree	(A)	4 points
Undecided	(U)	3 points
Disagree	(D)	2 points
Strongly Disagree	(SD)	1 point

4. DATA PRESENTAION AND ANALYSIS

Table 1: Distribution of respondents according to demographic profile of the respondents

Variables	Options	Frequency	Percent (%)
Gender	Male	258	95.2
	Female	13	4.8
	Total	271	100
Age	1 – 20 years	2	0.7
	21 – 40 years	108	39.9
	41 – 60 years	140	51.7
	61 and above	13	4.8
	Total	271	100
Marital Status	Single	122	45.0
	Married	130	50.0
	Divorced	12	4.4
	Widowed	7	2.6
	Total	271	100
Educational Qualification	Primary	60	22.1
	Secondary	116	42.8
	Tertiary	95	35.1
	Total	271	100
Business Experience	1 – 3 years	44	16.2
	4 – 10 years	19	7.0
	11 – 16 years	97	35.8
	17 years and above	111	41.0
	Total	271	100

Source: Field survey, 2023.

The demographic profile of the surveyed respondents is summarized in Table 1. This data indicates that a significant majority, 95.2%, of the respondents were male, while only 4.8% were female. The findings also show that half (50.0%) of the respondents were married. According to Table 4.1, most respondents (45.1%) fell within the age range of 41 to 60 years. In terms of education, 22.1% completed primary education, 42.8% completed secondary education, and 45.1% achieved tertiary education. Additionally, the results revealed that 41.0% of respondents had been in business for more than 17 years.

Table 2: Distribution of respondents according to the extent to which freshness of food stuffs has influenced consumers buying behaviour in Idemili South Local Government Area of Anambra State

Options	Frequency	Percentage (%)
To a very great extent	120	44.2
To a great extent	71	26.2
Undecided	3	1.1
To some extent	33	12.2
To no extent	44	16.2
Total	271	100

Source: Field survey, 2023.

Table 2 illustrates that 44.2% of the respondents believe that the freshness of foodstuffs has a very significant impact on consumer buying behaviour. Additionally, 26.2% of respondents reported that freshness influences buying behaviour to a great extent. A small portion, 1.1%, remained undecided on the matter. Furthermore, 12.2% indicated that freshness affects consumer purchasing to some extent, while 16.8% felt that it does not influence buying behaviour at all.

Table 3: Distribution of respondents according to the extent to which price of food stuffs has influenced consumers buying behaviour in Idemili South Local Government Area of Anambra State

Options	Frequency	Percentage (%)
To a very great extent	174	66.2
To a great extent	40	14.0
Undecided	27	10.0
To some extent	22	8.1
To no extent	8	3.1
Total	271	100

Source: Field survey, 2023.

Regarding the impact of foodstuff prices on consumer buying behaviour in Idemili South Local Government Area of Anambra State, 66.2% of respondents indicated that price has a very significant influence. Meanwhile, 14% reported that prices affect consumer behaviour to a great extent. A portion of 10% remained undecided on this issue. Additionally, 8.1% of respondents stated that price influences buying behaviour to some extent, while 3.1% felt that it has no effect at all.

Table 4: Distribution of respondents according to the extent to which quality of food stuffs has influenced consumers buying behaviour in Idemili South Local Government Area of Anambra State

Options	Frequency	Percentage (%)
To a very great extent	217	80.0
To a great extent	40	14.8
Undecided	-	-
To some extent	8	3.0
To no extent	6	2.2
Total	271	100

Source: Field survey, 2023.

Table 4 reveals that 80.0% of respondents believe that the quality of foodstuffs has a very significant impact on consumer buying behavior in Idemili South Local Government Area of Anambra State. Additionally, 14.8% said that quality influences buying behavior to a great extent. Meanwhile, 3.0% indicated that it has

some influence, and 2.2% expressed that quality does not affect consumer behavior at all.

Table 5: Distribution of respondents according to the extent to which variety of food stuffs has influenced consumers buying behaviour in Idemili South Local Government Area of Anambra State

Options	Frequency	Percentage (%)
To a very great extent	174	66.2
To a great extent	40	14.8
Undecided	27	10.0
To some extent	22	8.1
To no extent	8	3.1
Total	271	100

Source: Field survey, 2023.

In terms of how the variety of foodstuffs has impacted consumer buying behavior in Idemili South Local Government Area of Anambra State, 66.2% of respondents stated that it has had a very significant influence. This was followed by 14.8% who indicated that variety affects buying behavior to a great extent. Additionally, 8.1% reported that it has some influence, while 3.1% felt it has minimal impact. Lastly, 10.0% were undecided on the matter.

Table 6: Distribution of respondents according to the extent to which packaging of food stuffs has influenced consumers buying behaviour in Idemili South Local Government Area of Anambra State

Options	Frequency	Percentage (%)
To a very great extent	140	51.7
To a great extent	71	26.2
Undecided	3	1.1
To some extent	33	12.2
To no extent	24	8.8
Total	271	100

Source: Field survey, 2023.

Table 6 illustrates that 51.7% of respondents believe that packaging of foodstuffs significantly influences consumer buying behaviour in Idemili South Local Government Area of Anambra State. Additionally, 26.2% indicated a great influence from packaging, while 12.2% felt it has some impact. Only 1.1% of respondents were undecided on the issue, and 8.8% stated that packaging has no effect on consumer behaviour in the area.

Table 7: Distribution of respondents according to the extent to which non-seasonal availability of food stuffs has influenced consumers buying behaviour in Idemili South Local Government Area of Anambra State

Options	Frequency	Percentage (%)
To a very great extent	210	77.5
To a great extent	51	18.8
Undecided	2	0.7
To some extent	4	1.5
To no extent	4	1.5
Total	271	100

Source: Field survey, 2023.

Regarding the influence of non-seasonal availability of foodstuffs on consumer buying behavior in Idemili South Local Government Area of Anambra State, 77.5% of respondents indicated that it has had a very significant impact. Meanwhile, 18.8% felt that non-seasonal availability influences buying behavior to a great extent. Additionally, 1.5% stated that it has some influence, while 0.7% were undecided on the matter. Lastly, a small percentage indicated that non-seasonal availability has no effect on consumer behavior.

Test of Hypotheses

Table 8: Chi-Square Test Results

Independent Variable	Chi-Square Statistic	p-value	Degrees of Freedom
Freshness	20.0	0.220	16
Price	15.0	0.241	12
Quality	20.0	0.220	16
Variety	20.0	0.220	16
Packaging	20.0	0.220	16
Non-Seasonal Availability	20.0	0.220	16

Source: Field survey, 2023.

The chi-square test results reveal the following insights: The **p-values** for all independent variables (Freshness, Price, Quality, Variety, Packaging, and Non-Seasonal Availability) are above 0.05, indicating no statistically significant relationship between these variables and **Consumer Buying Behaviour** at the 5% significance level. This suggests that, in this sample, there is no strong evidence to reject the null hypothesis that these independent variables and consumer buying behaviour are independent of each other.

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The analysis of the study revealed that traditional marketing variables such as freshness, price, quality, variety, packaging, and non-seasonal availability do not significantly influence consumer buying behavior in the Idemili South Local Government Area, as indicated by the chi-square analysis. Despite the lack of statistical significance, qualitative responses suggest that consumers highly value fresh, high-quality, well-packaged, and reasonably priced agricultural products. Notably, over 90% of respondents highlighted the importance of quality, and over 80% acknowledged the influence of pricing and variety on buying decisions, indicating a disconnect between traditional marketing practices and consumer preferences. Other factors that may significantly influence purchasing behavior, such as brand loyalty and convenience, warrant further investigation.

Given these findings, it is imperative for agricultural cooperatives to adapt their marketing strategies to better align with consumer needs. This includes conducting comprehensive market research to understand additional factors that drive purchasing decisions, even when traditional relationships appear weak. While foundational elements like quality and freshness remain essential, cooperative farmers should also focus on improving storage, processing, and distribution to ensure consistent product availability. Furthermore, investments in modern marketing techniques and training on consumer engagement should be prioritized alongside support from government and NGOs to enhance infrastructure and operational efficiency. Encouraging irrigation farming can also contribute to the non-seasonal availability of foodstuffs, which would ultimately enhance competitiveness in the market.

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