Performance Assessment of Yam Markets in Afikpo South Local Government Area of Ebonyi State, Nigeria

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Abstract

The purpose of this research was to assess the performance of yam markets in Afikpo South Local Government Area (LGA) of Ebonyi State. Multi stage sampling technique was adopted in the research. The LGA has three major markets out of which two were purposively selected considering their size and the level of yam marketing activities. Lists of major yam marketers in the two markets were obtained and twenty (20) marketers from each of the markets were randomly selected to give a total of forty (40) respondents. Data collected were analyzed using frequency tables, percentages and mean. The result of the research showed that there are more men77.5% than women 22.5% as yam marketers in the market and they generally have low level of education. The result also showed that there is dearth of marketing services. Identified problems from the result of this research include insufficient fund, high cost of transportation, inadequate storage facilities, etc. Recommendations include formation of marketing cooperatives, provision of adequate storage facilities, among others.

Keywords: *Assessment, Performance, Yam, Market system, Efficiency*

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Background to the Study

According to (Moghalu, 2012), agriculture provides for Nigeria the most cost-effective path to growth and development, with its ever extending value chains, agriculture offers jobs to over 60% of the working population, and if well-harnessed could be a sustainable pivot for the much awaited industrialization. It is increasingly obvious that improvement in the agricultural development and growth can offer a pathway to reduction in the rural poverty, but evident-based farm level policies and instruments are pre-requisites. However, agriculture has been faced with numerous challenges, some of which are opined by Fasari (2006) and (FAO, 2012) are: the bulkiness and perish ability of its products, in addition to its seasonality. These tend to spur a chain of effects ranging from; agricultural commodity price volatility, weak bargaining power to the farmers, weak agricultural market efficiency and a general disincentive to the national economy. In effort to achieve the desired level and targets in agriculture, in terms of adequate food production and provision of substantial support for the local industries, the practice of agriculture requires adequate availability of land and supply of vital inputs. There is also the need for an efficient marketing system to enable enhanced marketing of commodities. This position is supported by Bassey, Okon and Ibok (2013).

Nwokoye (1997) and Oladejo (2006) defined marketing as the performance of business activities that direct the flow of goods and services from producer to consumer in order to satisfy the customer and accomplish the farm objectives. Thus marketing embraces activities relating to the product itself, the pricing, distribution, communication, promotion, post-sale matters, marketing research and sale forecasting. In the case of yam, an important aspect in its marketing is the size because it determines the pricing of the yam.

Rilley (2012), stated that marketing is the all-embracing function that links the business with customer needs and wants in order to get the right product to the right place at the right time. Marketing concerns meeting the needs and wants of consumers, It is a business wide function, and it deals with understanding customer's needs and desires and finding ways to provide products or services which customers demand.

There are no doubt yam farmers have been making efforts toward producing yams for domestic consumption by the country's population, the rate of demand for yam product is higher than supply. This challenge causes marketers to strive to meet consumer needs. This problem poses a very serious competition among yam marketers not only in the Local Government Area but in the whole of Ebonyi State, and the nation at large. The study therefore sought to address some research questions in relation to yam marketing in Afikpo South Local Government Area of Ebonyi State, Nigeria. For example, what are the socio-economic characteristics of yam marketers? What are the marketing activities that exist in the markets? What are the sources of finance for yam marketers? What are the factors influencing yam marketing? What are the constraints encountered by yam marketers in the study area?

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study was to assess the performance of yam markets in Afikpo South Local Government Area of Ebonyi State.

Specific Objectives

The specific objectives were to:
i.   Determine the personal characteristics of respondents
ii. Identify the marketing activities/services available in the markets
iii. Identify source(s) of finance for marketing of yams
iv. Identify the factors affecting the marketing of yams in the markets
v.   Identify the constraints to the marketing of yams in the markets

Statement of the Problem

Market performance of most commodity markets, in the opinion of Isibor and Ugumba (2014) has been, to some extent, source of constraints to the marketing of agricultural products, especially in Nigeria. According to Folayan and Oguntade (2010) although different governments have made efforts to enhance market performance in Nigeria markets much still needs to be done in this regard.

Efficient food marketing system has been documented to reduce post harvest loses, ensure adequate returns to farmer's investment and stimulate expansion in food production thereby enhancing the level of food security in the country (Ladele and Ayoola (1997). Other studies such as Bassey Okon and Ibok, (2013), Oladapo (2007) and Tura (2010) all lend credence to the importance of efficient marketing system in promoting economic development. Assessing the current state of performance of commodity markets in the localities, especially in the case of markets in Afikpo South Local Government Area, will present the real scenario of their performance and will in turn help determine the necessary things to be put in place towards enhancing their performance and efficiency of the marketing system.

Justification of the Study

Market performance, ordinarily means how well or badly a market carries out its marketing activities or services to satisfy the desires and needs of sellers and buyers. When these are adequately done in a market, it will be said that the marketing system is efficient.

According to Osundu and Ijioma (2014), assessment of a market performance considers such things as availability of marketing services/activities in the market, the type of market structure, the nature of the marketing channel, factors influencing marketing services/activities, prices of commodities, etc. The consumers/buyers needs and desires are to a large extent satisfied if the supply of commodities is adequately ensured and sold or supplied at prices that will appeal to them and this is possible only when the performance of the market is efficient (Oladele, 2015), In the opinion of Bassey et al (2013) the greater the performance of a market, the more the development of the marketing system and the more the involvement of relevant personnel and Agencies.

Hence, an efficient marketing system, no doubt, will always direct towards bringing the desired welfare to all categories of people involved in the market business (Tura et al, 2010). To this regard, therefore, performance assessment of markets in Afikpo South Local Government Area (LGA) is a step in the right direction.

Materials and Method
Study Area
The study was carried out in Afikpo South Local Government Area (LGA) of Ebonyi State, in 2018. Afikpo South Local Government Area of Ebonyi State is an agrarian LGA with a good number of the people involved in one form of agricultural production or the other mainly at the subsistence level. The climatic condition in the LGA is favourable for the cultivation of arable crops such as maize, rice, yam, cocoyam, cassava, banana/plantain, etc. Apart from cultivating crops, the people are also involved in keeping small ruminant animals (sheep and goat). They also keep domestic birds.

Data Collection
Primary data for this study were collected from two markets in the LGA. Copies of questionnaires were administered to marketers as well as scheduled interviews. Books, Journals, among others were sources of Secondary data.

Method of Data Collection
A multistage sampling method was adopted in the study. There are three major yam markets in Afikpo South LGA namely: Owutu, Oso and Ebunwana. The first stage involved the purposive selection of the two major markets namely Owutu and Oso markets. This is due to their size and the high concentration of yam marketers and marketing activities in these markets. Lists of major yam marketers in the two markets were obtained. Owutu market had a sampling frame of 26 marketers, while Oso market had a sampling frame of 22 marketers and this gave a total sampling frame of 48 yam marketers. The next stage was the use of simple random sampling technique to select 20 yam marketers in each of the markets to give a sample size of 40 respondents.

Analysis of Data
Data collected from the study area were analyzed with the use of descriptive statistics such as means, frequency counts and percentages.

Results and Discussion
Socio economic characteristics of respondents

Table 1: Personal characteristics of respondents

Item	Frequency	Percentage (%)	x̄
Sex			
Male	31	77.5	0.78
Female	9	22.5	0.22
Total	**40**	**100**	**1**
Age (years)			
15-25	2	5	0.05
26-35	5	12.5	0.13
36-45	13	32.5	0.33
Above 45	20	50	0.5
Total	**40**	**100**	**1**
Marital Status			
Single	15	37.5	0.375
Married	25	62.5	0.625
Total	**40**	**100**	**1**
Experience (years)			
1-5	5	12.5	0.13
6-10	7	17.5	
11-15	22	55	
Above 15	6	5	0.05
Total	**40**		**0**
Household size			
1-5	21	52	0.52
6-10	6	15	0.15
None of the above	13	32.5	0.17
	40	**100**	**1**
Educational level			
No formal education	13	32.5	0.325
Primary	10	25	0.25
Secondary	17	42.5	0.42
Tertiary	-		
Total	**40**	**100**	**1**

Source: Computed from field data, 2014

The results of the socio economic characteristics are presented in Table 1. The result indicated that there are more male (77.5%) in marketing of yams as against female (22.5%). This implies that marketing of yams in the study area was gender sensitive. The results also indicated that the age bracket of (above 45) years had the highest percentage of 50% of yam marketers. However, half 50% of the respondents were in their active age (15-45 years). The mean age of all respondents was about 45 years. This implies that the respondents are in their active and productive age and should be well able to withstand the rigor in the yam marketing venture. The results as presented in Table 1 also showed that (62.5%) of the respondents are married and 37.5% are single. The educational level of the respondents indicated that 32.5% do not have any formal education. This implies that majority (67.5%) of the respondents had a form of education. This result implies that yam marketers in the study area should be open to innovation and adoption of new and better ways of marketing their product. The study also

revealed that majority (55%) of the respondents had yam marketing experience between 11-15 years. Only 6% have yam marketing experience above 15 years. This result showed that yam marketers in the study area are quite knowledgeable and experienced about the business.

Marketing Activities/Services.
Table 2: Available marketing activities/services in the markets

Activities/services	Frequency	Percentage %	x
Transportation	30	75	0.75
Storage	10	25	0.25
Grading			
Financing			
Standardization			
Processing			
Packaging			
Total	**40**	**100**	**1**

Marketing Structure
In the case of yam markets in Afikpo South LGA, the result shows that the market structure is more of Oligopolistic in nature. This is because there are less number of producers/sellers as compared to the number of buyers or consumers. This type of structure appears to be the case in most commodity markets. (Adekanye, 1997). This position agrees with the opinion of Okeogere, John and Ose (2013) in their study of marketing yam in Ika Local Government Area of Delta State. The study showed that though few sellers existed in the market, that there were no barriers to entry and exit for sellers and buyers.

Marketing Channels
Agricultural commodities move from the farmers/producers to consumers over time and space. This movement is made possible through various market intermediaries. The medium through which the various farm commodities pass between producers/farmers and consumers is referred to as marketing channel (Ofor and Oparaeke, 2010).

In Nigeria the channel for any particular farm output may vary at different places even with the same goods and that is the reason Adegeye and Dittoh (1985), stated that marketing channels are important in evaluating marketing system because they indicate how the various market participants are organized to accomplish the movement of a product from the point of production to the point of consumption.

According to Adegeye et al (1985), there are identified six classes of middlemen in Nigeria and that in some commodity markets; some of these middlemen have overlapping functions.
  i.   Farm-gate middlemen
  ii.   The commissioned Agents
  iii. The non-commissioned Agents
  iv.   The food cooperative marketing Agency
 v.   Wholesaler
  vi.   Retailer
Source: Adegeye and Dittoh (1985)

Any marketable farm output has its own specific channel in moving to the consumers. There exist, no doubt, differences in the distribution channels of yams in Nigeria. Ofor et al (2010), identified marketing channel for yam as follows:

Producers (Farmers)

↓

Local Wholesaler

↓

Retailer

↓
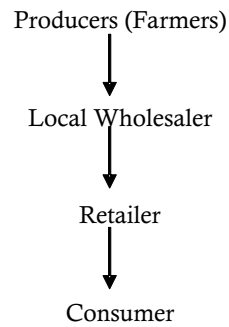
Consumer

Source: Ofor et al, (2010)

From the result of this research, the marketing channel for yams in Afikpo South Local Government Area showed that yams move from the farmers to retailers and finally to consumers, but most of the time, farmers sell directly to the consumers as show below.

Producers (Farmers)   Producers (Farmer)

↓   ↓

Local Wholesaler

↓

Retailer

↓

Consumer   Consumers
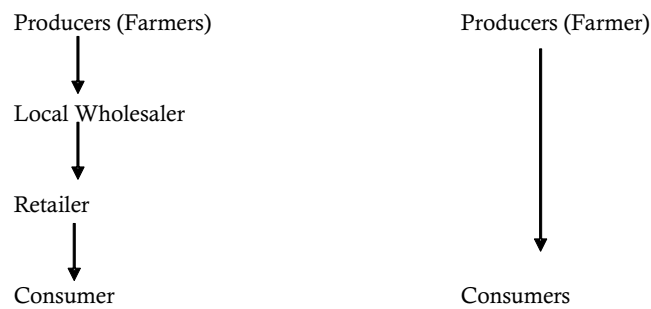
Source: Field work, (2018)

Factors influencing marketing of yams in Afikpo South LGA

Table 3: Factors that influence marketing of yam in the LGA

Items	Frequency	Percentage (%)	x
Mode of transportation			
Bicycles	5	12.5	0.125
Motorcycles	10	25	0.25
Foot/portrage	10	25	0.25
Buses	15	37.5	0.37
Pick up Vans	-	-	-
Hilux Vans	-	-	-
Lorries	-	-	-
Trucks	-	-	-
Total	**40**	**100**	**1**
Source(s) of finance			
Cooperative	-	-	-
Borrowing	-	-	-
Thrift	-	-	-
Loan	10	25	0.25
Personal savings	30	75	0.75
Profit	-	-	-
Total	**40**	**100**	**1**
Source(s) of purchase of yams			
Retailers	-	-	-
Wholesales	-	-	-
Producers (farmers)	40	100	1
Total	**40**	**100**	**1**
Place (s) of purchase of yams			
Abakaliki	10	25	0.25
Benue Town	-	-	-
Edda	20	50	0.5
Others	10	25	0.25
Total	**40**	**100**	**1**
Costs/Expenses			
Market Association dues	17	27.5	0.275
Rent for space	16	40	0.4
Security charges	15	37.5	0.375
Loading/off loading charges	-	-	-
Total	**40**	**100**	**1**

Constraints to marketing of yams

Table 4: Constraints to marketing of yams

Constraints	Frequency	Percentage %	x
Price fluctuations	8	20	0.2
Lack of credit facilities	7	17.5	0.175
Inadequate credit facilities	-	-	-
Lack of storage facilities			
Inadequate Storage Facilities	10	25	0.25
Transportation	8	20	0.2
Socio-economic problems	7	17.5	0.175
Market information	-	-	-
Others	-	-	-
Total	**40**	**100**	**1**

The major constraints identified by the marketers were price fluctuations, inadequate storage facilities, transportation and some socio-economic problems. About 70% of the respondents indicated these as major constraints faced by them.

Conclusion

Assessment of market performance is an important aspect in marketing management and as such very important in any agricultural production. An efficient marketing system, no doubt, makes it possible for some benefits to accrue to both the producers/sellers and consumers/end users. In order that a market functions efficiently, there is need to access information relevant to the market as this will reveal the situations in or the nature of the market and in turn inform decisions that will assist in the management of the market business. The result of this research on yam markets in the LGA of study shows that there is need to improve the marketing situations and which will in turn lead to enhanced performance of the markets. Yam markets in Afikpo South LGA as revealed by the results of this research have not performed creditably well, therefore, there is need for improvement.

Recommendations

1. Farmers/sellers in the LGA should be advised to form marketing cooperatives to enable them pool their resources to enhance their marketing business.
2. There is need to put in place marketing services such as proper grading and standardization so as to enhance pricing efficiency and market performance.
3. Governments and Private sectors should endeavor to establish more storage facilities for yams in the markets in the LGA.
4. Governments at Federal, State and Local levels should construct more feeder roads and rehabilitate the existing ones to enhance access to farms and ease evacuation of yams to the Urban Centres and markets.
5. There is need also for the producers to enjoy Guaranteed Minimum Price Policy from the Government

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