

IMPACT OF BUSINESS ETHICS OF FOODSTUFF RETAILERS ON CONSUMERS' BUYING BEHAVIOURS IN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN EKITI STATE, NIGERIA.

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Abstract

Foodstuff retailers are specialized group of retailers whose major function is to make different foodstuffs available to the consumers. The main purpose of this study is to investigate the impact of business ethics of foodstuff retailers on consumer buying behaviour in tertiary institutions in Ekiti State, Nigeria. Two research questions were used to guide the study. Six hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance. The study adopted descriptive survey research design. The population consisted of all consumers patronizing mini and main markets in the three public universities in Ekiti State. The sample for the study was 250 respondents selected using accidental sampling procedure. The correlation coefficients were found to be 0.80. The value was considered high enough for establishing the reliability of the instrument. Data collected were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The study found out that some of the students preferred to buy foodstuff in large quantity outside the school. However, the findings showed that respect is considered the predominant business ethics among foodstuff retailers in tertiary institutions in Ekiti State. Based on the findings of this study, it was concluded that there was positive relationship between business ethics of the foodstuff retailers and consumers buying behaviours. It was also established that respect best contributed to consumers buying behaviours in tertiary institutions in Ekiti State. It was therefore recommended that the foodstuff retailers within and around the campuses should cultivate the habit of treating customers with respect in order to attract more patronage. Also, the foodstuff retailers should be fair in their dealings with consumers irrespective of their gender. Through this, the consumers would not have the feeling of being cheated.

Introduction

The survival of human beings is dependent on the availability of some vital products, such as clothing, shelter, and food among others. Food is any substance that can be metabolized by living things to give energy and build tissues. When consumed in proper and adequate quantity, it helps to sustain life in good health and ensures normal growth in both animal and human survival in life. By this, food is a necessity for human existence across the globe. Consumer buying behaviors is the decision and action people undertake to buy products or services for personal use.

Ananda (2016) observed consumer buying behavior as a process by which consumers identify their needs, collect information, evaluate alternatives and make the purchase decision. Business ethics is considered in this study as the moral principles and regulations that influence the behaviors of buyers and sellers to act in acceptable way in business transactions. Aromole (2017) posited that business ethics are those rules or influences that govern marketers' behaviors in the market place so as to coordinate business activities in acceptable way. This implies that business ethics act as an inevitable rule

for peaceful business activities in a market place. Thus, Boes and Okafor (2015) observed that consumers naturally prefer to buy more products from wholesalers or retailers they feel behave in a more friendly and more acceptable way. There are many business ethics that may be put into practice for enhanced patronage. These include honesty, fairness, respect, and loyalty among others.

According to Ratchford, Gauri, Jindal and Namin (2023), retailing encompasses the business activities involved in selling goods and services to consumers for their personal, family, or household use. It includes every sale to the final consumer. While, retailing is also the last stage in the distribution process. Through retailing, consumers who have no capacity to reach the producers or farmers that sell foodstuffs are having access to get what they want. However, the retail sector is increasingly being viewed as an important activity in the economy and its impact on society in general is readily acknowledged. Another indication of the important role retailers' play in our society is provision of employment. Through this, retailers are becoming increasingly important in their role as one of the channel of distributions. In the past, when suppliers were dominant, retailers supplied the merchandise that was an offer and consumers selected from this. As retailers become significantly more powerful and relevant they are more able to exert their power over suppliers and stock only the brands they wish to sell depending on their overall retail strategy, supplier relationship and consumers' needs. The effect of this is that retailers are able to offer varieties of goods from different wholesalers to the consumers, and consumers also are able to purchase

their needs in the quantity of their choice without going to the wholesalers.

Consumer and Consumers' Buying Behaviour

In the fields of economics, marketing, and advertising, a consumer is generally defined as the one who pays to enjoy the goods and services produced by a seller (that is, company, organization). However, Shih, Yu and Tseng (2015) described a consumer as anyone who makes a purchase and transaction decision of goods and services from a store or a company. Therefore, a consumer can be a person (or group of people), usually classified as an end user or target demographic for a product, good, or service. In the absence of their active demand, the manufacturers would lack a key enthusiasm to produce, which is to sell to consumers. Consumers may comprise of individual or groups which include schools, families, clubs and any form of organizations, purchasing units within organizations, and even government. Smriti Chand (2020) noted that, human behaviour encompasses every thought, feeling or action by people. This implies that every thought, motive, sensation and decision that is made every day, is classified as human behaviour. There is a link between human behaviour and consumer behaviour which define consumer behaviour as the study of human behaviour in a consumer role. Consumer behaviours consists of various aspects. Butu, Bruma, Tanasa, Rodino, Dinu, Vasiliu and Dobos (2020) identified three characteristics of consumer behaviours. These include:

- i. Consumer behaviour is dynamic; The behaviour of human being changes, their thoughts, feelings and actions are not constant. This implies changes in consumer actions.

Consumers may react and change their minds at crucial minutes of making purchase due to certain influences. This results in changes in consumer actions concerning the purchase of a product.

- ii. Consumer behaviour includes interactions; These interactions occur among the feelings, actions, thoughts, and the environment of individuals.
- iii. Consumer behaviour is all about exchange between people; In order to receive something else in return, individuals have to give up something of value to others.

Business is the life wire of every community. Wherever people gather, there must be business activities to keep the environment alive and healthy as explained by Okafor (2011). Business ethics refers to the standards businesses should observe in their dealings over and above compliance with the letters of the law. According to Weiss (2021) Business ethics covers issues such as fair dealings with the labour force, customers, suppliers and competitors as well as the impact of business activities on public health and the environment. It implies that whereas businessmen should maximize profits and maintain a good reputation and ethical standards that will not conflict with the goal of profit maximization. Abiodun and Oyeniyi (2015), observed that, in a formal organisation, ethics is based on broad principles of loyalty, respect, responsibility and fairness and focuses on internal stakeholder issues such as product quality, customer satisfaction, employee wages and benefits, and local community and environmental responsibilities. Thus, the following are ethical practices expected of a retailer loyalty, fairness, trust, respect. Consumer

prefer to buy their foodstuffs from retailers who treat them as king rather than going to a retailer who is not bothered if consumer is treated well in accordance with business ethics. It is particularly vital for retail businesses to focus on enhancing relationships with consumers as explained by Abid, Fezal, Hassan, Ahmadi, Amrollahi and Mortimer (2024). Consumers increasingly look for retailers who provide value not only in terms of acceptable prices and an attractive range, but also in terms of relationship value according to Sharma, Srivastava, Sharma, Singh and Nijjer (2024).

Purpose of the study

The main purpose of this study is to investigate the impact of business ethics of foodstuff retailers on consumer buying behaviour in tertiary institutions in Ekiti State, Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

The conduct of business in Ekiti State especially areas where tertiary institutions are sited appear to be overwhelmed with lots of practices particularly among foodstuff retailers. It has been observed that foodstuff retailers on campuses in Ekiti State University seem not to maintain good customer relationship with their consumers.

Some of these retailers seem to believe that students are always busy with academic activities, and that they find it difficult to go outside the school to buy foodstuffs. Similarly, it has been observed that some of these retailers use wrong measurement that is not acceptable outside the school to measure foodstuff such as rice, beans, garri, and yam flour for the students in order to maximize profit. In view of the observed unethical behaviours of these foodstuff retailers,

they seem not to believe in the popular saying that customer is the king.

Research Questions

1. What is the predominant business ethics of foodstuff retailers among the identified?
2. What are the consumers buying behaviour in tertiary institutions in Ekiti State?

Research Hypotheses

1. There is no significant relationship between business ethics of the foodstuff retailers and consumers' buying behaviours.
2. Which of the business ethics that will best contribute to consumers' buying behaviour?

Methodology

This study adopted descriptive research design of the survey type. This method involves the collection of data from the field. The population of this study consisted of all consumers patronising foodstuff sellers on campuses and around the three public universities in Ekiti State. The sample for this study consisted of 300 respondents, and was selected from the three public universities in Ekiti State. Accidental sampling procedure was used to select 140 consumers from Ekiti State University Ado Ekiti, 95 consumers from Federal University Oye Ekiti and 65 consumers from Bamidele Olumilua University of Education, Science and Technology Ikere Ekiti because the selected universities do not have equal numbers of population. However, the selected sample from each institution was based on the observed population of the institutions. A questionnaire constructed by the researcher was used to collect relevant data from the respondents. Three experts in Vocational and

Technical Education Department were given the draft of the instrument, the purpose of the study and the research questions for face and content validity. The reliability of the instrument was established through a pilot study conducted on 20 foodstuff consumers who were not part of the selected sample selected. The half split method was used and the data collected on the test were subjected to Cronbach Alpha test. A reliability coefficient of 0.80 was obtained, and the instrument was adjudged to be reliable for the study. A total of 300 instruments were personally administered by the researcher and one research assistance on respondents accidentally met at the point of sales in the three public universities in Ekiti State. Some of the respondents went away with the instrument while some who filled where not patient to complete it and some did not filled correctly due to academic stress encountered in school and starving. The researcher and research assistance were able to retrieve 289 copies of the instruments out of which 250 copies were filled correctly and collated for analysis. The data collected for the study were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics with the aid of Statistical Packages for Social Science (SPSS).

Presentation and Analysis of Data

Research Question 1

What is the predominant business ethics of foodstuff retailers among the identified?

1. To determine predominant business ethics among foodstuff retailers in tertiary institutions in Ekiti State, scores of item 1-16 in section B of BEFRCBQ were subjected to statistical analysis involving mean rating and standard deviation. The result is presented in Table 1

Table 1: Mean rating of predominant business ethics among foodstuff retailers in tertiary institutions in Ekiti State (n = 250)

Business Ethics among Foodstuff Retailers	Mean	SD	Ranking
Respect	16.88	2.070	1st
1. Using of of abusive words,unfair treatment and deceptions are common among foodstuff retailers.	3.57	0.530	
2. Exercising obligations with due care induce consumers to buy foodstuff	3.64	0.530	
3. Retailers selling foodstuff in the school environment do not always uphold marketing rules and regulations	3.52	0.549	
4 Displaying of good customer relationship influence customers patronage	3.13	0.856	
5. Rendering of aftersales services promote the image of foodstuff retailers	3.49	0.727	
6. Prompt attention and listening to feedback promote image of foodstuff retailers	3.16	0.922	
Fairness	14.97	2.307	2nd
7. Giving equal treatment to the customers induce good patronage	3.20	0.909	
8. Emergency buying sometimes enables the retailers to cheat consumers	3.54	0.605	
9. Retailers who sell foodstuff within the school are mostly not bordered about quality goods.	3.67	0.569	
10. Foodstuff retailers always give their customers fair vaule for the moneyplayed on their product	3.39	0.611	
11. Giving equal treatment to the customers induce good patronage	3.22	0.845	
Loyalty	13.78	2.599	3rd
12. Retailers are generally not loyal in the market	3.46	0.741	
13. Few of the foodstuff retailers in my school are loyal	3.38	0.778	
14. Some retailers in my school use wrong measurement to measure foodstuff such as rice,beans,gaari e.t.c. for the students	3.31	0.805	
16. Some retailers cliam to be loyal in their behaviour to students even when it is obvioius that they are not	3.40	0.648	
17. Retailers sometimes offer spoilt goods for the students to buy	3.21	0.906	

The information contained in Table 1 showed the predominant business ethics among foodstuff retailers in tertiary institutions in Ekiti State. Considering the mean score of 16.88, respect is considered the predominant business ethics among foodstuff retailers in tertiary institutions in Ekiti State. This is closely followed by fairness with the mean score of 14.97, while the mean score of 13.78 indicated that loyalty is considered the least predominant

business ethics among foodstuff retailers in tertiary institutions in Ekiti State.

Question 2: What are the consumers' buying behaviours in tertiary institutions in Ekiti State?

To determine consumers' buying behaviours in tertiary institutions in Ekiti State, scores of item 17-20 in section B of BEFRCBQ were subjected to statistical analysis involving frequency count and mean rating. The result is presented in Table 2

Table 2: Frequency counts and Mean rating of consumers' buying behaviours in tertiary institutions in Ekiti State (n=250)

<i>Item</i>	<i>S A</i>		<i>A</i>		<i>D</i>		<i>SD</i>		<i>Mean</i>
	<i>F</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>	
18. I prefer to buy foodstuff outside the school	176	70.4	66	26.4	5	2.0	3	1.2	3.66
19. Emergency buying sometimes make me buy within the school environment	164	65.6	72	28.8	13	5.2	1	0.4	3.59
20. I always take my time to buy my choice of goods during holiday but sometimes buy in the school due to imposed buying	124	49.6	100	40.0	22	8.8	4	1.6	3.38
21. I am not the type that visit school market frequently, I buy foodstuff in large quantity outside the school	129	51.6	101	40.4	17	6.8	3	1.2	3.43

The information in Table 2 showed that 96.8% of the respondents preferred to buy foodstuff outside the school. Also, 94.4% of the respondents feel that sometimes, emergency buying make them buy within the school environment while 89.6% of the respondents always take time to buy their choice of goods during holiday but sometimes, they buy in the school due to imposed buying. Finally, 92% of the respondents feel that they are not the type that visits school market frequently, they prefer to buy foodstuff in large quantity outside the school.

Testing of Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant impact of business ethics of the foodstuff retailers on consumers' buying behaviours.

To test this hypothesis, scores on business ethics of the foodstuff retailers (scores of item 1-16 in section B of BEFRCBQ) and consumers' behaviours (scores of item 17-20 in section B of BEFRCBQ) were collated and subjected to statistical analysis involving regression analysis at 0.05 level of significance. The result is presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Regression Analysis showing the impact of business ethics of the foodstuff retailers on consumers' buying behaviours

<i>Model</i>	<i>Unstandardized Coefficients</i>		<i>Standardized Coefficients Beta</i>	<i>T</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
	<i>B</i>	<i>Std. Error</i>	<i>Beta</i>		
(Constant)	42.045	1.029		40.872	.000
Business Ethics	.288	.067	.454*	4.316	.000

Dependent Variable: Consumer Buying Behaviours

$R=0.454$; $R^2= 0.017$; Adjusted $R^2= 0.016$; $F = 18.629$; $p=0.000 < 0.05$ (Significant)

Table 3 revealed that there was positive correlation between business ethics of the foodstuff retailers and consumer buying behaviours ($R =$

0.454). The value of coefficient of determinant ($R^2 = 0.017$) indicated that business ethics of the foodstuff retailers accounted for 1.7% of the total variance

in consumer buying behaviours while the remaining 98.3% unexplained variation could largely be due to other variables examined in this study. The F-ratio (18.629) was significant at 0.05 level of significance. This implies that the predictor variable will provide a significant explanation for the variation in consumer buying behaviours. Thus, the hypothesis there is no significant impact of business ethics of the foodstuff retailers on consumers' buying behaviours was not accepted.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant impact of respect of the foodstuff retailers on consumers' buying behaviours.

To test this hypothesis, scores on respect of the foodstuff retailers (scores of item 1-6 in section B of BEFRCBQ) and consumers' behaviours (scores of item 17-20 in section B of BEFRCBQ) were collated and subjected to statistical analysis involving regression analysis at 0.05 level of significance. The result is presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Regression Analysis showing the impact of respect of the foodstuff retailers on consumers' buying behaviours

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	44.866	.894		50.173	.000
Respect	.143	.083	.343*	1.733	.000

Dependent Variable: Consumer Buying Behaviours

$R=0.343$; $R^2= 0.013$; Adjusted $R^2= 0.012$; $F = 13.003$; $p=0.000 < 0.05$ (Significant)

Information contained in Table 4 revealed that there was correlation between respect of the foodstuff retailers and consumer buying behaviours ($R = 0.343$). The value of coefficient of determinant ($R^2 = 0.013$) indicated that respect of the foodstuff retailers accounted for 1.3% of the total variance in consumer buying behaviours while the remaining 98.7% unexplained variation could largely be due to other variables examined in this study. The F-ratio (13.003) was significant at 0.05 level of significance. This implies that the predictor variable will provide a significant explanation for the variation in consumer buying behaviours. Thus, the hypothesis there is no significant impact

of respect of the foodstuff retailers on consumers' buying behaviours was not accepted.

Hypothesis 3: There is no significant impact of fairness among the foodstuff retailers on consumers' buying behaviours.

To test this hypothesis, scores on fairness among the foodstuff retailers (scores of item 7-11 in section B of BEFRCBQ) and consumers' behaviours (scores of item 17-20 in section B of BEFRCBQ) were collated and subjected to statistical analysis involving regression analysis at 0.05 level of significance. The result is presented in Table 5.

Table 5: Regression Analysis showing the impact of fairness among the foodstuff retailers on consumers' buying behaviours

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	47.717	.807		59.116	.000
Fairness	.206	.116	.245*	1.778	.000

Dependent Variable: Consumer Buying Behaviours

$R=0.245$; $R^2= 0.013$; Adjusted $R^2= 0.012$; $F = 13.160$; $p=0.000 < 0.05$ (Significant)

The result in Table 5 revealed that there was correlation between fairness among the foodstuff retailers and consumer buying behaviours ($R = 0.245$). The value of coefficient of determinant ($R^2 = 0.013$) indicated that fairness among the foodstuff retailers accounted for 1.3% of the total variance in consumer buying behaviours while the remaining 98.7% unexplained variation could largely be due to other variables examined in this study. The F-ratio (13.160) was significant at 0.05 level of significance. This implies that the predictor variable will provide a significant explanation for the variation in consumer buying behaviours. Thus, the hypothesis there is no significant impact

of fairness among the foodstuff retailers on consumers' buying behaviours was not accepted.

Hypothesis 4: There is no significant impact of loyalty of the foodstuff retailers on consumers' buying behaviours.

To test this hypothesis, scores on loyalty of the foodstuff retailers (scores of item 12-16 in section B of BEFRCBQ) and consumers' behaviours (scores of item 17-20 in section B of BEFRCBQ) were collated and subjected to statistical analysis involving regression analysis at 0.05 level of significance. The result is presented in Table 6.

Table 6: Regression Analysis showing the impact of loyalty of the foodstuff retailers on consumers' buying behaviours

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	42.412	.920		46.099	.000
Loyalty	.319	.072	.264*	4.449	.000

Dependent Variable: Consumer Buying Behaviours

$R=0.245$; $R^2= 0.018$; Adjusted $R^2= 0.017$; $F = 19.792$; $p=0.000 < 0.05$ (Significant)

Information contained in Table 6 showed that there was correlation between loyalty of the foodstuff retailers and consumer buying behaviours ($R = 0.264$). The value of coefficient of determinant ($R^2 = 0.018$) indicated that loyalty of the foodstuff retailers

accounted for 1.8% of the total variance in consumer buying behaviours while the remaining 98.2% unexplained variation could largely be due to other variables examined in this study. The F-ratio (19.792) was significant at 0.05 level of significance. This implies that the

predictor variable will provide a significant explanation for the variation in consumer buying behaviours. Thus, the hypothesis there is no significant impact of loyalty of the foodstuff retailers on consumers' buying behaviours was not accepted.

Hypothesis 5: None of the variables of business ethics of the foodstuff retailers

will best contribute to consumers' buying behaviours.

In order to test the hypothesis, scores relating to the business ethics among the foodstuff retailers (scores of item 1-16 in section B of BEFRCBQ) and consumers' behaviours (scores of item 17-20 in section B of BEFRCBQ) were computed and subjected to statistical analysis involving regression analysis at 0.05 level of significance. The result is presented in Table 7.

Table 7: Regression Analysis showing the business ethics of the foodstuff retailers that best contributes to consumers' buying behaviours

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	34.404	8.044		4.277	0.000
Respect	1.524	.251	.424*	6.066	0.000
Fairness	.718	.144	.244*	4.969	0.000
Loyalty	.434	.069	.176*	4.325	0.000

Dependent Variable: Consumers' Buying Behaviour

$R=0.339$; $R^2= 0.115$; Adjusted $R^2= 0.111$; $F = 30.888$; $P=0.000 < 0.05$ (Significant)

Table 7 revealed that that respect best contribute to consumers' buying behaviours in tertiary institutions in Ekiti State ($\beta = 0.424^*$, $p < 0.05$). The null hypothesis is therefore rejected. The information in Table 7 revealed that there is a significant positive multiple correlation between the predictor variables (respect, fairness, and loyalty) and consumers' buying behaviours in tertiary institutions in Ekiti State ($R=0.339$, $p < 0.05$). This implies that all the predictor variables are factors that can exert influence on consumers' buying behaviours in tertiary institutions in Ekiti State. The single best contributor to the total variance in consumers' buying behaviours in tertiary institutions in Ekiti State is respect ($\beta = 0.424$). This was closely followed by fairness ($\beta = 0.244$). The variable with the least contribution to is loyalty ($\beta = 0.176$).

In terms of magnitude of the weight of regression coefficient, respect had the highest contribution (42.4%) to consumers' buying behaviours in tertiary institutions in Ekiti State, followed by fairness (24.4%), and loyalty (17.6%) with the least contribution.

Hypothesis 6: There is no significant difference between male and female response to consumers' buying behaviours in tertiary institutions in Ekiti State.

In order to test the hypothesis, scores relating to the male and female response to consumers' buying behaviours (scores of item 17-20 in section B of BEFRCBQ) were computed and subjected to statistical analysis involving t-test at 0.05 level of significance. The result is presented in Table 8.

Table 8: t-test analysis of male and female response to consumers' buying behaviours

Variables	N	Mean	SD	df	t_{cal}	p-value
Male	59	9.64	1.164	248	0.231	0.817
Female	191	9.09	1.085			

$P > 0.05$

The result in Table 8 showed that $df = 248$, $t_{cal} = 0.231$, $p = 0.817$ at 0.05 level of significance. Since the p value of 0.817 is greater than 0.05, the null hypothesis is accepted. This implies that there is no significant difference between male and female response to consumers' buying behaviours in tertiary institutions in Ekiti State.

Findings of the Study

The following findings were revealed by the study based on research questions answered and hypotheses tested.

1. Based on the finding of this study, it was revealed that respect is considered the predominant business ethics among foodstuff retailers in tertiary institutions in Ekiti State.
2. It was also revealed from the findings that, some of the students preferred to buy foodstuff in large quantity directly from their various homes during holidays. Sometimes, emergency buying makes some of the students who could not buy all their needs from home to buy in the market outside the school due to the high price of foodstuff in the school market. While few students still prefer to buy within the school environment to avoid stress.
3. It was discovered that retailers respect best contribute to consumer buying behaviours in tertiary institutions in Ekiti State.
4. It was further discovered that there is no significant difference between male and female response to

consumers' buying behaviours in tertiary institutions in Ekiti State.

5. Finally, it was discovered that a large number of students in tertiary institutions in Ekiti State prefer to buy their foodstuff at the markets close to school and not in the market around the school due to the unethical behaviour of the retailers that sell foodstuff in the school main market.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made;

1. Foodstuff retailers in the school should treat their customers' the same way customers are treated outside the school premises.
2. Foodstuff retailers should always sell quality goods to the students and as well use the right Mudus (measuring rubbers and cups) in measuring foodstuff likes beans, rice, gaari among others.
3. The school management should make consumer friendly policies that all foodstuff retailers within the school to follow and ensure strict compliance.
4. Students should be encouraged to buy their foodstuff within the school to save them the stress of carrying heavy loads of foodstuffs from home.

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