

Information Needs and Information Seeking Behaviour of Artisans in Offa Metropolis, Kwara State, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study investigated the information needs and information seeking behaviour of artisans in Offa Local Government Area of Kwara State. Information needs of people may vary according to their social group, age, gender, economic status, interest and profession. However, every individual including artisans need information for growth and survival. Survey research design was adopted using questionnaire as the data collection instrument and data were analysed using the SPSS to determine simple percentages. The results revealed that artisans need information mainly for survival and they exhibit more positive behaviour when using formal sources of information. The research concluded that artisans face several challenges like high cost of information, lack of time and lack of I.C.T. knowledge during their search for information. The study therefore recommended that libraries and information centres should reduce to the barest minimum the cost of obtaining information by bringing their services closer to the people thereby eliminating the problem of lack of time and distance.

Keywords: Artisan, Information needs, Information seeking behavior, Information, Kwara State.

Introduction

Information needs of people do vary based on their age, gender, level of education, economic status, social/interest groups and profession. However, individuals, mostly artisans, need information for growth and survival. The importance of information to artisans has been increasingly recognized all over the world. The Cambridge International Dictionary of English (1995) defines an artisan as a person who does skilled work with his or her hands. Also, Mooko and Aina (2007) defines artisans as those who perform skilled work with their hands. Artisans refer to persons who are engaged in occupation such as hairdressing / hair cut, mechanics, refrigerator / air conditioner repairing, printing, carpentry/ furniture making, shoe making, building / construction, electrical work, spraying / painting, fashion designing / tailoring, vulcanizing, book binding, plumbing, panel beating and welding . Some of the characteristics of artisans are high labour intensity, low capital requirements, high skill level, small scale of production, simple technologies, self- employment and the use of local raw materials (Pye, 1998). They are equipped

mainly with vocational education which may be acquired formally or informally. In most cases, they serve as apprentices before they become perfect in their vocation. Artisans provide essential goods and services for the society and economy; they engage in income-generating activities to earn a living, thereby reducing unemployment and eliminating poverty in order to improve their standard of living and bring about growth in the economic development of the nation.

Various definitions of information seeking behaviour have been given by researchers. Some define the term based on the general model of information seeking behaviour developed by Wilson (Tella and Ajiboye, 2007). Information seeking behaviour is also viewed as an individual's way and manner of gathering and sourcing for information for personal use, knowledge updating and development. According to Wilson (2003) information seeking behaviour are those activities a person engage in when identifying his or her needs for information, searching for, and using or transferring that information. The fundamental aim of the user of information generally is to make decisions on what to do about given situations. It is therefore not surprising that information is needed for awareness, increased productivity, health and knowledge update amongst others.

The information needs of an individual have to be studied in the context of the information environment, which include not only the information needs but also the information- seeking behaviour, access to information and sources of information used for meeting the information needs. Information needs and information seeking behaviour can be influenced by certain variable, such as occupation, gender, age and educational level. Yusuf (2012) identified the information needs of various groups such as hairdressers, rural farmers, customs and excise workers, and caterers in hotels and tourism centres and discovered that their information needs vary according to their occupation. The approach of each to information seeking may differ. Artisans' information seeking behaviour can equally be affected by educational qualifications. Many may not have any formal education. Nevertheless, they need information to uplift their standard of living and to upgrade their trades but the needed information is not being provided to them at a particular point in time in order to satisfy those needs.

Statement of the problem

Without doubt, information remains a very important resource for every human regardless of class, status, age, and educational background. Also, information is the driving force behind the development of a nation. Therefore, if information and ideas are basic human needs, thus, free and equal access to such information and ideas by members of the society, and especially the artisans, becomes even more fundamental. Artisans constitute the larger part of the country's total population and it has become worrisome that their information needs are still not met (Issa, 1998). Hence, the urgent need to re-visit the information needs and information seeking behaviour of these artisans to provide solutions to the problems they encounter in their search for information.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to investigate the information needs and information seeking behaviour of artisan in Offa Metropolis, Kwara State. However, the specific objectives are to:

- i. ascertain the information needs of artisans in Offa metropolis, Kwara State;
- ii. identify the sources used by the artisans in Offa Metropolis, Kwara State in meeting their information needs;
- iii. ascertain the information seeking behaviours of the artisans in Offa Metropolis, Kwara State in meeting their information needs;
- iv. ascertain the level of satisfaction of artisans in Offa Metropolis, Kwara State with the information sources and services available; and
- v. identify some of the challenges faced by artisans in Offa Metropolis, Kwara State in their information seeking process.

Research Questions

The following research questions were also formulated to guide the study:

- i. What are the information needs of artisans in Offa Metropolis, Kwara State?
- ii. What sources are being used by the artisans in Offa Metropolis, Kwara State to meet their information needs?
- iii. What is the information seeking behaviour of the artisans in Offa Metropolis, Kwara State in meeting their information needs?
- iv. How satisfied are the artisans in Offa Metropolis, Kwara State with the information sources and services available? and
- v. What are some of the challenges faced by artisans in Offa Metropolis, Kwara State in their information seeking process?

Literature Review

The concept of information is not alien to human beings on earth. In fact, we all need and make use of information everyday of our lives; either consciously or unconsciously. Wasike and Munene (2012) described information as “knowledge and power” acquired through experience or study. Dervin (2005), characterized information need as a process involving situations, outcomes, gaps and bridges. And according to Madukoma and Opemipo (2016), information need could be referred to as the extent to which information is required to solve problems, as well as the degree of expressed satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the information. In the case of artisans, Hossain and Islam (2012) opined that artisans do not have specific information needs like doctors and other professionals, rather, individually, they have different information needs based on their work activities.

Nevertheless, Yusuf (2012) claimed that artisans have specific information needs like other people with specialized professions. Equally, Moko and Aina (2004) observed that job-related information needs of artisans involve finding on the availability of raw materials for their trade, locating government lenders and improving their knowledge. However, access to information is an essential condition for development. Hence Aina (2004) remarked that artisans and rural dwellers need information mainly for survival. Thus any piece of information that will help

increase their productivity level and attract more customers is of critical importance to their survival.

The report of Patrick and Ferdinand (2016) showed that artisans in rural areas of Ondo State, Nigeria, needed information to improve their trades. They indicated other information needs to include information to improve their health, household maintenance and keep abreast of happenings in Government policies which can impact on their businesses. Similarly, Yusuf (2012) reported that the information needs of artisans include information on raw materials availability (cost, quality, location, source and dealer), how to obtain loan from co-operative societies and government, new products, and current designs. His findings further showed that nearly half of the respondents needed information on education such as good schools, institutions to apply for admission and the cost. This clearly shows that not all artisans are illiterate (including those in rural areas). There are so many graduates who have decided to delve into artistry-related occupation; some because of the passion they have for the craft while some due to their inability to secure a white collar job.

Patrick and Ferdinand (2016), Yusuf (2012), and Aina (2004), all attested to the fact that information sources are stored in various media, print and non-print, namely: books, journals, newspapers, computers, databanks, cassettes, discs, tapes, etc. This is transmitted through printing, orally, audio-visually, telegraphically, electronically, peer group, through supervisors, experienced co-workers, superiors, and so on. Individuals can seek information from these varieties of sources, and these sources convey information in a variety of ways. Ukachi (2007) as cited in Msoffe and Ngulube (2013) opined that information sources are the information carriers while the media are the channel through which information is passed to the user.

According to Adika (2003), for an individual to use an information resource, several factors must be considered such as knowledge of the existence of the information resource and access to relevant information resources. Several researchers have reported that artisans rely more on interpersonal and face-to-face communication more than explicit sources of information. This was buttressed by Ngulube, Lwoga and Stilwell (2010) in their analysis of 12 articles on information behaviour of urban and rural dwellers in developing countries. They found out that people mainly rely on informal sources to meet their information needs. Msoffe and Ngulube (2013); Hossain and Islam (2012); and Aina (2004) all reported that artisans in rural areas do not make use of the library as a source of information but instead listen to radio and information from other informal sources because of their easy accessibility. Factually, people tend to seek information from one another, but revert to authoritative sources as they confirm and reject ideas.

Consequently, artisans also have authoritative sources which Yusuf (2012) reported to include association of their various occupations, mosques and churches, as well as friends and relatives. These are in accordance with several other authors (such as Hossain and Islam, 2012; Msoffe and Ngulube, 2013; and Patrick and Ferdinand, 2016) who have revealed that artisans revert to informal sources that are close to them to meet their information needs. Similarly, Mansour (2015) observed that sources that are most convenient and accessible will be used by artisans. He further

stated that very few of the artisans make use of the libraries, read newspapers and use the cyber café.

Hossain and Islam (2012) defined, information seeking behaviour as a complex activity requiring access to diverse sources of information to deal with personal, social and work related problems. However, in a more comprehending way, Wilson (2003) referred to information seeking behaviour as those activities a person may engage in when identifying his own needs for information, searching for such information in any way and using or transferring that information. This definition could be considered accurate because Wilson's definition was not limited to only the behaviour exhibited when searching for information but rather, gave a holistic definition which captures the behaviour exhibited by a person or group right from the moment the person recognizes that he or she needs information, to the very last stage the information is put to use.

Information seeking behaviour according to Boyol (2006), is usually affected by some factors and situation-dependent activity where a seeker's action are influenced by access to information perceived quality and trust in the information sources. Uhegbu (2007) and Kolawole and Igwe (2010) submitted that information seeking behaviour can be described as the way an information user conducts himself or acts when looking for information. These can include utterance, gesture, anger, anxiety, eagerness, reluctance, zeal or any other attributes displayed by an information user in his effort to acquire or receive news, data, stories or anything that may inform or misinform his knowledge or understanding of something. Also, Majid and Kassim (2000) as cited in Yusuf (2012) affirmed that factors affecting information seeking behaviour include persons' reason for seeking information, the kind of information being sought, the ways and sources through which needed information is being sought.

Furthermore, Wilson's (2003) proposition broadens the scope of information seeking behaviour. And according to Orlu (2016), different models of information seeking behaviour addressing different information needs have come into existence in literature amongst which is Wilson (2003) that proposed a more generalized model which can be applicable to artisans. Orlu (2016) reported that there will always be confusion, frustration and doubts when artisans explore potential sources of information. However, the initial stages of information seeking involve gaps in individuals' knowledge. In his model, Wilson (2003) asserted that increased interest, confidence and sense of direction with the information source determine the level of satisfaction or dissatisfaction. This simply implies that the source of information also has the tendency of controlling the users' behaviour. When the source is able to provide the needed information at the right time, then there is the possibility of maximizing a positive behaviour. Therefore, systems should be able to maximize positive emotions and behaviours and minimize negative emotions and behaviours.

Methodology

This study adopted descriptive survey research design. This design is considered suitable as it provides a high level of general capability in representing a large population (Issa, 2008). The population for this study consisted of all the registered male and female artisans in Offa metropolis. According to Offa Local Government Business Premises Register (OLGBPR, 2012), there are 1,108 registered artisans in the 13 vocations identified. The stratified random sampling technique

was adopted in the selection of the 115 registered artisans used for the study so as to give each member equal representation. Ninety-seven (97) were males while eighteen (18) were females. A sampling fraction of 10% was used to select the respondents from each identified vocation given a sample size of 115 artisans. Elements were drawn randomly from each stratum. Questionnaire was adopted as the data collection instrument. To test for the reliability of the instrument, the Test-Retest method was used and this was achieved by administering the same research instrument to a group of 20 people at a different time and the reliability co-efficient of both results was computed which gave $r=0.78$.

Results and Discussion

A total of 115 copies of the questionnaire were administered and 83 (72.2%) questionnaire were returned and found usable. Furthermore, there was an inquiry into the respondents' type of vocation, 16 (19.0%) were bricklayers/builders and 15 (18.0%) were tailor/fashion-designers. The least were shoe-makers and AC repairers who have 4 (4.8%) and 3 (3.6%) respectively. This implies that majority of the artisans were bricklayers and tailor/fashion-designers. Table 1 presents the information needs of the respondents.

Table 1: Information Needs of Artisans in Offa Metropolis

Information Needs	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total%
For survival.	66 (79.5%)	15 (18.1%)	1 (1.2%)	1 (1.2%)	83 (100%)
For occupational development,	63 (75.9%)	18 (21.7%)	–	2 (2.4%)	83 (100%)
For health related issues.	64 (77.1%)	14 (16.9%)	3 (3.6%)	2 (2.4%)	83(100%)
For household maintenance.	43 (51.8%)	11 (13.3%)	25 (30.1%)	4 (4.8%)	83 (100%)
On how to obtain loan from cooperative society and government.	22 (26.5%)	17 (20.5%)	35 (42.2%)	9 (10.8%)	83 (100%)
For family planning.	43 (51.8%)	16 (19.3%)	15 (18.1%)	9 (10.8%)	83 (100%)
On government policy.	52 (62.7%)	18 (21.7%)	9 (10.8%)	4 (4.8%)	83 (100%)
On new products.	55 (66.3%)	23 (27.7%)	2 (2.4%)	3 (3.6%)	83 (100%)
Information on how to gain admission into schools.	56 (67.5%)	14 (16.9%)	13 (15.7%)	–	83 (100%)

From Table 1, majority of the respondents 81 (97.65%) agreed that they needed information for survival and for occupational development. Similarly, majority of the respondents 78 (94%) agreed that they needed information on how to improve their health and on new products, while most of the respondents 70 (84.3%) also agreed that they need information on how to gain admission into schools and on government policies. Interestingly, more than half of the respondents 44 (53%)

disagreed that they need information on how to obtain loan from cooperative societies and government. Table 2 presents the various information sources from where artisans in Offa Metropolis get their information.

Table 2: Types of Information Sources used by Artisans in Offa Metropolis

Information sources	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total%
Radio.	65 (78.3%)	15 (18.1%)	2 (2.4%)	1 (1.2%)	83 (100%)
Friends and families.	48 (57.8%)	27 (32.5%)	5 (6.0%)	3 (3.6%)	83 (100%)
Association of occupation.	49 (59.0%)	24 (28.9%)	4 (4.8%)	6 (7.2%)	83 (100%)
Religious organizations.	15 (18.1%)	12 (14.5%)	46 (55.4%)	10 (12.0%)	83 (100%)
Libraries.	51 (61.4%)	23 (27.7%)	4 (4.8%)	5 (6.0%)	83 (100%)
Newspapers.	68 (81.9%)	9 (10.8%)	3 (3.6%)	3 (3.6%)	83 (100%)
Television.	64 (77.1%)	16 (19.3%)	1 (1.2%)	5 (6.0%)	83 (100%)
Internet.	66 (79.5%)	9 (10.8%)	2 (2.4%)	6 (7.2%)	83 (100%)

From Table 2, the major source of information used by the artisans in Offa Metropolis were television and radio as they both have 80 (96.4%) of the total respondents, followed by newspapers with 77 (92.8%) respondents. 75 (90.4%) agreed to using the Internet and asking friends and families for information. 74 (89.2%) and 73 (88.0%) agreed that they do get information from libraries and association of their occupations respectively, while most of the respondents 56 (67.5%) however, indicated that they do not get information from religious organizations. Table 3 depicts the behaviour exhibited by respondents during their search for information.

Table 3: Distribution of Respondents based on Information Seeking Behaviour

Information Seeking Behaviour	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total%
I ask the executives and other members of my association for the information I need.	56 (67.5%)	20 (24.1%)	4 (4.8%)	3 (3.6%)	83 (100%)
I visit libraries, information centers and cyber café for information.	46 (55.4%)	21 (25.3%)	9 (10.8%)	7 (8.4%)	83 (100%)
I go to local government, Palace or NGO's for information.	6 (7.2%)	12 (14.5%)	61 (73.5%)	4 (4.8%)	83 (100%)
I ask friends and relatives.	36 (43.4%)	37 (44.6%)	6 (7.2%)	4 (4.8%)	83 (100%)
I am always curious when searching for information.	44 (53.0%)	23 (27.7%)	12 (14.5%)	4 (4.8%)	83 (100%)
I visit churches or mosques for information.	8 (9.6%)	4 (4.8%)	70 (84.3%)	1 (1.2%)	83 (100%)

From Table 3, majority of the respondents representing 76 (91.6%) agreed that their executives and other members of their associations were consulted for their information needs. This was followed by 73 (88.0%) of the respondents who agreed that they ask their friends and relatives. Over half of the respondents representing 67 (80.7%) agreed that they visit libraries, information centres and cyber café for information. The same number of respondents also indicated that they were always curious when searching for information. However, majority of the respondents with 71 (85.5%) disagreed that it is part of their behaviour to visit churches or mosques in their search for information. In the same way, 65 (78.3%) disagreed that they go to local government, Palace or to NGOs to satisfy their information needs.

The artisans were also asked about their satisfaction with information sources and services provided and most of the respondents 51 (61.5%) agreed that they were moderately satisfied with the information they get from their sources while 45 (54.2%) agreed that they were highly satisfied. However, most of the respondents, 65 (78.3%) and 52 (62.7%) disagreed that they were partially dissatisfied and fully dissatisfied respectively with the information they get from their sources. This implies that the artisans were satisfied with the information they get and the sources they use. Table 4 presents the challenges that artisans face during their search for information.

Table 4: Challenges Facing Artisans in their Information Seeking Process

Challenges	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total%
High cost of getting information.	49 (59.0%)	31 (37.3%)	3 (3.6%)	–	83 (100%)
Illiteracy.	45 (54.2%)	31 (37.3%)	4 (4.8%)	3 (3.6%)	83 (100%)
Language barriers.	46 (55.4%)	30 (36.1%)	3 (3.6%)	4 (4.8%)	83(100%)
Lack of time.	22 (26.5%)	22 (26.5%)	35 (42.2%)	4 (4.8%)	83 (100%)
Geographical distance.	49 (59.0%)	31 (37.3%)	–	3 (3.6%)	83 (100%)
Lack of ICT knowledge.	47 (56.6%)	29 (34.9%)	4 (4.8%)	3 (3.6%)	83 (100%)

Table 4 showed that the major challenges indicated were high cost of getting information and geographical distance with 80 (96.4%). This was followed by illiteracy, language barriers and lack of ICT knowledge respectively with 76 (91.6%) respondents. However, 44 (53%) respondents agreed that lack of time is an obstacle while 39 (47%) do not see lack of time as a challenge. This means that the major challenges that artisans face during their search for information are high cost of getting the information, geographical distance, lack of ICT knowledge and illiteracy.

Discussion of Findings

Artisans need information mainly for survival, occupational development and health status. They also need information on new products, household maintenance and government policies which can have effect on their businesses. These findings confirm the position of Aina (2004), who stated that artisans need information mainly for survival; the results of Patrick and Ferdinand (2016) who revealed that artisans need information on how to improve their occupation, health and maintain their households; and the findings of Wasike and Munene (2012) as well as Lwoga, Ngulube and Stilwell (2010), who discovered artisans need information on family planning and the majority needed information on how to gain admission into schools. It was also revealed that artisans in Offa metropolis do not need information on how to obtain loan from cooperative societies and government. This particular findings is not in agreement with Yusuf (2012), who reported that artisans needed information on how to obtain loan from cooperative societies and the government.

On the information sources artisans use in meeting their information needs, the findings revealed that artisans make use of several sources of information such as radio, television, libraries, Internet and newspapers. In contrast, Aina (2004); Hossain and Islam (2012) and Nsofee and Ngulube (2013) reported that artisans do not make use of the library and other formal sources but make use of informal sources of information. Nevertheless, they also make use of informal sources such as from friends and families and professional associations. This findings is in consonance with Yusuf (2012) who revealed that religious organizations (churches and mosques) were not major sources of information.

On the behaviour exhibited by the artisans in their search for information, the results revealed that artisans were always curious when searching for information and also resort to informal sources like asking friends, families, executive members and other members of their associations. This

conforms with Igwe (2012) who asserted that artisans show more positive behaviour and always trust information from informal sources. They also indicated that it is in their behaviour to go to libraries, information centers and cyber cafes when the need arises. However, they disagreed to making use of some informal sources like going to churches and mosques and going to local government, Palace and NGOs.

On the artisans' level of satisfaction with the information sources, the findings revealed that artisans were moderately satisfied with the information they get and the sources used which were mostly formal sources. This finding is not in consonance with the findings of Lwoga, Ngulube and Stilwell (2010) who reported that artisans rely on and where satisfied with information from informal sources. On the challenges artisans face while searching for information, the results revealed that some of the major challenges faced were high cost of getting the information, geographical distance, lack of ICT skills and illiteracy. This finding agree with Aina (2004); Yusuf (2012); and Igwe (2012) who reported geographical distance, lack of ICT skills and cost of getting information, as major challenges. However, this study also aligns with the findings of Patrick and Ferdinand (2016) which highlighted language barrier as an obstacle.

Conclusions

Artisans needed information on certain things but mostly, information on what will make them survive. However, they do not need information on how to obtain loan from cooperative societies and government. Artisans in Offa Local Government area make use of both formal and informal sources of information which is a clear indication that majority of them can read. They are also curious during their search for information and show more positive behaviour when using formal sources of information. They are also satisfied with their information sources. In conclusion, they are faced with certain challenges during their search for information. These challenges include high cost of getting information, illiteracy, geographical distance and lack of ICT skills.

Recommendations

Based on these findings, the following recommendations are made:

Majority of the artisans make use of formal sources and are also satisfied with the information obtained thus, libraries and information centers should endeavor to solve the problem of high cost of getting desired information especially from formal sources.

Public/community libraries have some roles to play most especially, by organizing literacy classes for those who could not make use of the formal sources of information. Also, desired information resources should be made available to artisans who can make use of formal sources of information.

Finally, it is not new that artisans may be very busy as artistry work may take longer time to complete, hence relevant institutions like public libraries and information centres should try as much as possible to bring their services closer to the people in order to eliminate the problem of long distance. This can be achieved in form of mobile public libraries (library on wheels) or pop-up libraries as is in practice in most developed countries.

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