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**THE INFLUENCE OF AGE ON CONSUMER ACTIVISM**

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**ABSTRACT**

*The aim of this paper is to 'investigate if there is a relationship between age and consumer activism in Nigeria. To achieve this objective, some related literature were reviewed, while stratified sampling, and t-statistic were use for analyzing the data, The result of the study revealed that apart from willingness to uphold the decisions taken at meetings, age has no significant relationship with other aspects of consumer activism such as willingness to join, finance, serve, attend meetings and solicit for members for consumer associations. Based on these findings, it is therefore recommended that companies should design their marketing strategy in such a way that their products will accommodate the different age groups in the market place. This action will increase sales volume as many age groups are being serviced as against selling their products to a particular age group.*

**KEYWORDS**

Influence, Age, Consumer and Activism.

**INTRODUCTION**

It is the aim of this paper to find out if there is a relationship between age and the level of consumer activism. In other words, does age influence the level of consumer activism in Nigeria?

Generally, age influences the buying behaviour of consumers and by extension, their level of consumer activism. The interests and needs of consumers differ from one age group to another. Children (under thirteen years of age), teenager (13-19 years old), young adults (20-35 years) and older people differ substantially in needs, interests, preference and purchases (Agbonifoh, Ogwo and Nnolim 2006) Changes in need with age are in certain cases biological while others are acquired (Agbonifoh, Ogwo and Nnolim, 2006). The young adults and older consumers are in the working class group and are therefore more likely to make purchase decisions. By implications, they are in a position to express or voice their satisfaction or dissatisfaction about a product and this in turn also influences their level of consumer activism.

It is therefore the aim of this paper to examine the influence of age on consumer's level of activism. To achieve this objective, the paper has been sectionalized into five parts to include introduction (already stated), review of related literature, methodology, data presentation and discussion of findings and conclusion.

**REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

Before discussing age as it relates to consumer activism, it is important to examine the concept consumer activism.

**THE CONCEPT CONSUMER ACTIVISM**

Consumer activism is the concerted efforts, actions and collective reaction of consumers to protect their perceived interest in the market place (Ijewere, 2005). It is intended to reduce, limit or control the over-bearing excesses of manufacturers and/or vendors such as high prices, poor quality and artificial scarcity of goods. The basic concept behind consumer activism vis-a-vis the manufacturer, can be likened to two main forces that are exerting pressure on one another, with the possibility of the stronger force gaining an upper hand over the weaker one. The situation is that, while the manufacturer is out to maximise profit, consumers, on the other hand, through their collective efforts are willing to fight for their rights. They complain in order to maximise their satisfaction. The end result of these actions is consumer activism and protection that exist all over the world including Nigeria.

Over the years, the Nigerian consumer has been bombarded with all sorts of low quality products in the market place, especially in the area of drugs, food, petroleum products, motor spare parts, cosmetics, chemicals and services. According to the Standard Organisation of Nigeria (SON) (1997), about 60% of the goods produced in Nigeria are sub-standard, while about 25% are fake. Durojaiye (2000), also supported this position by saying that the Nigerian view, sub-standard goods, especially automobile spare parts are imported into Nigeria from countries such as Taiwan, while expired drugs come in from Europe and Asia and are passed on to unsuspecting consumers.

It is therefore not surprising that some consumer Associations have emerged in some parts of Nigeria. They include the tenants Association of Lagos, the Consumer Association of Lagos, the Enugu Consumer Movement and the Consumer Club of Agwu in Anambra State (Onah, 1997). However, these associations did not have a national spread as their activities were mainly restricted to the cities where they were established. Consequently, they could not tackle the problems of helpless consumers from a national perspective.

As a result of the perceived non-performance of these consumer associations and the yearning of Nigerian consumers for protection, the government responded by establishing some regulatory agencies and enacting some legislation to protect the Nigerian consumers. The legislations include the Price Control Act of 1970, Standards Organization of Nigeria Decree of 1971 and National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC) Decree of 1973. Others include the Weights and Measures Act of 1990 and Hire Purchases Act of 1990.

Although these legal remedies have been put in place by the Nigerian Government, consumers do not seem to take full advantage of them to seek redress and may not even be aware of their existence (Agbonifoh and Edoren, 1985). It is also the view of Cranston (2004:45) that "Legal remedies may be available to consumers in the event of business proving Obstreperous, but the evidence demonstrates that many consumers are ignorant of their legal rights".

**THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN AGE AND CONSUMER ACTIVISM**

Consumers who are young adults (i.e. 20-35years) and older adults (i.e. 35 and above) tend to control the purchasing power in the market place. This is in view of the fact that most of them fall into the working-class group. This implies that age can influence the purchasing behaviours of consumers. It therefore follow that since these group of consumers command the purchasing power in the market place, they are also in a better position to express their satisfaction and dissatisfaction about the performance of a product and this in turn influences their level of consumer activism. The aim of this study therefore, is to investigate if there is a relationship between age and the level of consumer activism.

**METHODOLOGY**

The methodology adopted in this study, was a survey of 858 adults in six major towns of Edo and Delta States. The six towns chosen are Benin, Auch, Ekpoma, Warri, Asaba and Sapele. These cities were selected based on their high population and literacy rate and they therefore have a high probability of being reasonably representative of the urban population of the two states.

The stratified sampling method was adopted for the study. This is to ensure adequate or proportional representation of the different categories or types of elements that makes up the population in the selected sample. The relationship between age and consumer activism, was verified by testing each of the six disaggregated elements of consumer activism against age. Thus, six sub hypotheses were subjected to test, that is, one in respect of each disaggregated factor.

In the data analysis plans, the hypothesis testing method was adopted using multiple regression analysis and simple frequency distribution.

**DATA PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

The relationship between age and consumer activism was examined by testing six sub-hypothesis which include:

- i. The relationship between age and willingness to join consumer association.
- ii. The relationship between age and willingness to finance consumer association.
- iii. The relationship between age and willingness to serve a consumer group in an official Capacity.
- iv. The relationship between age and willingness to attend consumer association meetings.
- v. The relationship between age and willingness to uphold the decisions taken at meetings.
- vi. The relationship between age and willingness to solicit for members for consumer associations.

The results and discussion of findings are hereby presented below:

**RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN AGE AND CONSUMER ACTIVISM**

This hypothesis verified the relationship between age and consumer activism by testing each of the six disaggregated elements of consumer activism against age. They include the willingness of consumers to join, finance, serve, attend meetings, uphold and solicit for members for consumer associations based on the data collected from fieldwork.

**THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN AGE AND WILLINGNESS TO JOIN CONSUMER ASSOCIATIONS**

In table 4.1 the coefficient of the variable age has a positive sign. The coefficient value of age is 0.00670 and thus reveals that a 10 percent change in age will not lead to a change in consumer activism in the area under study. The regression result of the t-value is 1.49. It failed the 5 percent level of significance test. However, it passes the 10 percent level of significance. The R2 value is 0.003. It shows that only about 0.3 percent of the variation in willingness to join consumer association has been explained in the regression.

The value of the F-test is 2.21. At 5%, the relationship is not significant. The DW value is 1.8294. The Durbin Watson statistics tells us if there are other intervening variables interfering with the result of any of the two variables. The DW value is 1.82 and therefore not significant at 5% level, but significant at 10% level. However, the result indicates that there may be other variables in the relationship level. However, the result indicates that there may be other variables in the relationship.

In summary, table 4.1 suggests that age has no relationship with consumers' willingness to join consumer associations.

**TABLE 4.1: LEAST SQUARE REGRESSION OF WILLINGNESS TO JOIN CONSUMER ASSOCIATIONS**

Variable	Coefficient	T-Test
Constant	3.94712	
Age	0.00670	1.49
RL	0.0025	
F	2.21	
DW	1.8294	

Source: Author's Fieldwork, 2009

**THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN AGE AND WILLINGNESS TO FINANCE CONSUMER ASSOCIATIONS**

The table 4.2 indicates that the coefficient of the variable Age has a positive sign.

The coefficient value of Age is 0.00438. It reveals that a ten percent change in age will lead to a 4.3 percent change in consumer activism in the area under study. The t-value of the regression result is 0.99. This is not significant at 5% level. The R<sup>2</sup> value is 0.001. It shows that only 0.1 percent of the variation between age and finance have been explained in the regression. The value of the F-test is 0.97. At 5% level, the relationship is not significant. The result indicates that there is no relationship between the two variables.

The DW value is 1.8337. Although the DW value is 1.83 and thus not significant at 5% level, but significant at 10% level.

In summary, table 4.2 shows there is no significant relationship between age and willingness to finance consumer association at 5% level.

**TABLE 4.2: LINEAR SQUARE REGRESSION OF WILLINGNESS TO FINANCE CONSUMER ASSOCIATIONS**

Variable	Coefficient	T-Test
Constant	3.86204	
Age	0.00438	0.99
RL	0.0011	
F	0.97	
DW	1.8337	

Source: Author's Fieldwork, 2009

**THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN AGE AND WILLINGNESS TO SERVE CONSUMER ASSOCIATIONS**

Table 4.3 indicates that the coefficient of the variable age has a negative sign. The coefficient value of age is -2.066. This reveals that a ten percent increase in age will lead to a 20 percent decrease in consumer activism in the area under study. The t-value of the regression result is -0.04. This is not significant at 5% level. The value of R2 is 0.000. It shows that there is no variation in the equation.

The value of the F-test is 0.00 and thus not significant at 5% level. It also means that there is no relationship between the two variables.

The DW value is 1.9101. The DW value is 1.91 and thus not significant at 5% level, but significant at 10% level.

In summary, table 4.3 suggests that age has no relationship with consumers willingness to serve as officials in consumer associations.

**TABLE 4.3: LINEAR SQUARE REGRESSION OF WILLINGNESS TO SERVE IN AN OFFICIAL CAPACITY IN CONSUMER ASSOCIATIONS**

Variable	Coefficient	T-Test
Constant	3.86070	
Age	-2.006	-0.04
RL	0.0000	
F	0.900	
DW	1.9101	

Source: Author's Fieldwork, 2009

**THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN AGE, AND WILLINGNESS TO ATTEND CONSUMER ASSOCIATION MEETINGS**

The table below shows that the coefficient of the variable age has a positive sign while the coefficient value of age is 9.431. This reveals that a 10 percent change in age will lead to a 93 percent change in consumer activism in the area under study. The t-value of the regression result is 0.03. This is not significant at 5% level. The R<sup>2</sup> value is 0.000. It implies that there is no variation between age and attend as explained in the regression.

The value of the F-test is 0.00. At 5% level, the relationship is not significant. The result indicates that there is no relationship between the two variables. The DW value is 1.8746. Even though the DW value is 1.87 and thus not significant at 5% level, but it is significant at 10% level.

In summary, table 4.4 suggests that age is not a major determinant in determining if consumers will be willing to attend meetings of consumer associations.

**TABLE 4.4: LINEAR SQUARE REGRESSION OF WILLINGNESS TO ATTEND CONSUMER ASSOCIATION MEETINGS**

Variable	Coefficient	T-Test
Constant	4.29865	
Age	9.431	0.03
RL	0.0000	
F	0.00	
DW	1.8746	

Source: Author's Fieldwork, 2009

### THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN AGE AND WILLINGNESS TO UPHOLD THE DECISIONS TAKEN AT CONSUMER ASSOCIATION MEETINGS

Table 4.5 indicates that the coefficient of the variable, age has a positive sign. The coefficient value of age is 0.01591. It reveals that a 10 percent change in age will lead to a percent change in consumer activism in the area under study. The t-value of the regression result is 3.40. This is significant at 5% level.

The  $R^2$  value is 0.013. The figure shows that only about 1.3 percent of variation in willingness to uphold decision taken has been explained in the regression. The value of the F-test is 11.53. This is significant at 5% level. The result indicates the relationship between the two variables. The DW value is 1.9004. The DW value is 1.98 and therefore not significant at 5% level, but only significant at 10% level.

In summary, table 4.5 suggests that age has a positive role to play in determining if consumers will be willing to uphold the decisions taken at consumer associations meetings.

**TABLE 4.5: LINEAR SQUARE REGRESSION OF WILLINGNESS TO UPHOLD THE DECISIONS TAKEN AT MEETINGS**

Variable	Coefficient	T-Test
Constant	3.72254	
Age	0.01591	3.40
$R^2$	0.0131	
F	0.53	
DW	1.9004	

Source: Author's Fieldwork, 2009

### THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN AGE AND WILLINGNESS TO SOLICIT FOR MEMBERS TO JOIN CONSUMER ASSOCIATIONS

Table 4.6 reveals that the coefficient of the variable, age has a positive sign. The coefficient value of age is 0.00161. This indicates that a 10 percent change in age will lead to 0.2 percent change in consumer activism in the area under study. The t-value of the regression result is 0.35. This is not significant at 5% level.

The  $R^2$  value is 0.0001. This means that no deviation in the regression as explained by this equation. In other words, there is no substantial relationship between age and consumer's willingness to solicit for new members to join consumer associations. The DW value is 1.8926. Although the DW value is 1.89 and thus not significant at 5% level, but it is significant at 10% level.

In summary, table suggests that age has a positive role in play in determining if consumers will be willing to uphold the decisions taken at consumers associations meeting.

**TABLE 4.6: LINEAR SQUARE REGRESSION OF WILLINGNESS TO UPHOLD THE DECISIONS TAKEN AT MEETING**

Variable	Coefficient	T-Test
Constant	4.07178	
Age	0.00161	0.35
$R^2$	0.0001	
F	0.12	
DW	1.89266	

Source: Author's Fieldwork, 2009

In summary, the results of this study revealed that age has a role to play in determining if consumers will be willing to uphold the decisions taken at consumer's associations meetings. To a large extent however, it was discovered that age has no role to play in consumers' willingness to join, finance, attend, serve and solicit for members for consumers associations. This implies that ages are not a factor in determining consumer's level of activism.

### CONCLUSION

The findings of this study revealed that age has no role to play in consumer activism in terms of willingness to join, finance and serve consumer associations. It also had an impact on their willingness to attend meetings and solicit for members for consumer associations. However, age only has a role to play in determining if consumers will be willing to uphold the decision taken at consumer association meetings. Based on these findings, the null hypothesis that there is no correlation between age and consumer activism is therefore accepted at 5 percent level of significance while the alternative hypothesis that there is a relationship between age and consumer activism is rejected.

Since the findings of this study has shown that the age of a consumer has no significant role to play in determining his level of activism, it is therefore advised that companies should design their marketing strategies in such a way that their products will appeal to all age groups in the market place. This will however be better achieved through the production of quality goods and services where consumers can maximise satisfaction.

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