ABSTRACT

This study examined the information needs, sources, information-seeking behavior of women artisans and the implications for empowerment in Offa, a semi-urban area in Kwara State of Nigeria. Survey research method was adopted with questionnaire as tool for data collection, involving 210 women artisans. Findings revealed that women artisans have information needs related to their work, but with information accessibility challenges due to unavailability of accessible information sources like libraries, as well as absence of empowerment programmes from government. It further revealed that the major sources of information for most women artisans were verbal or face-to-face mode of communications. The paper concludes that women constitute a vital asset of Nigeria and are a resourceful group with a good number practicing artisanship. Therefore, there is need to develop the information consciousness of the women artisans by the provision of efficient, effective and reliable formal information delivery mechanisms to them, such as community information centres.

Keywords: Information, Information Needs, Information Sources, Information Seeking Behaviour and Women Artisans

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INTRODUCTION

The importance of information cannot be overemphasized. According to Uka-chi, (2007) information is an important resource for individual growth and survival. The progress of modern societies as well as individuals depends a great deal upon the provision of the right kind of information, in the right form and at the right time. Information is needed to be able to take a right decision and also reduce uncertainty. Because information is valuable, it must be put to proper use, that is, made available to people or group of people who need it, after ascertaining the groups’ information needs and information seeking behaviour. Women as female artisans constitute one of the major users of information in the information society. The information society is where everyone can create, access, utilize and share information and knowledge, enabling individuals, communities and peoples to achieve their full potential in promoting their sustainable development and improving their quality of life (Olorunda, 2004). The main objective of information society is to empower all categories of people through access to and use of information, but there is concern that women artisans are beneficiaries of this.

A woman is female human being. It is usually used for an adult while the term girl is used for a female child or adolescent. However, the term woman is also sometimes used to identify a female human being regardless of age, as in phrases such as “woman’s right”. John (2005) sees a woman as a female who plays a significant role (wife or mistress or girl friend) in the life of a particular man. Women can be classified into three categories: as a mother, as a wife and as a daughter (Attoe, 2007). Nussbaum (1995) classifies women based on their role thus: as a mediator, someone who picks up what is going on beneath the surface and voices it; gives shape to compassion at places where it is invisible to others. In the international arena, a woman as a mediator often does voluntary work. She may quietly work for organizations, helping the old people or women and children around her. As a mother, a woman represents everything. She can organize the day for the children perfectly well, and have time to nourish her own personal growth and development. As a partner, a woman is not first and foremost a mother in the family but her relationship with the man in her life makes her a partner. As an Amazon, a woman is an independent and self-contained woman. Her relationship with men is more like a friend or a brother. She will not let herself “meld” together with a man in the same way as the other type of women. Even if she marries and has children, she will continue to be independent (Okhai, 2008).

There are different categories of information users in Nigeria. They include students, lecturers, researchers, women, traders, farmers, bankers, journalists etc. Each category of information users evolve from his or her respective occupation, profession and disposition. In this study, we shall be concentrating on the women whose disposition is artisanship- referred to as “women artisans”- as
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