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**CUSTOMER BEHAVIOUR AND SUSTAINABLE
BUSINESS PRACTICES: CASE OF BREAD
INDUSTRIES IN AWKA, ANAMBRA STATE.**

By

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ABSTRACT:

Bread has become a staple food in Nigeria since its first introduction into Nigeria in the 1920s. However, the current harsh economic hardship in the country has made it unaffordable. Thus, the sustainability of the industry comes on the mark. This study examines sustainable business practices in bread industries in Awka that influence customer behaviors. A descriptive survey research design was used. Three research questions and three hypotheses guided the study. The population consists of 200 bakeries. The instruments were a questionnaire and a Focus Group Discussion. Data was analyzed using means, Standard Deviation, and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). The results reveal that sustainable practices of bread manufacturers that promote and sustain customers' interests include online marketing, direct sales to consumers, and adding more ingredients to increase the quantity and quality of the bread, which sustain customers' purchasing decisions to a Large Extent. Also, there is no significant difference among male and female; old and new bread manufacturers in this regard. The study concludes that the business practices of bread manufacturers sustain customer behaviors in Awka. Recommendations include government efforts to reduce the problems of foreign exchange, the high cost of imported and local materials, and manufacturers' promotion of supply chain management.

Key Words: Customer Behaviour; Sustainability; Business Practices; Bread Industries, Supply Chain Management; Innovation.

Background of Study:

The customer is a very important factor in every business, that has the satisfaction of the customers as its major objective, to maximize production and profit. Consequently, consumer behavior becomes a very crucial aspect of consideration in business sustainability. Sustainability is the ability to continue over a long period, despite difficulties encountered by organizations and businesses. It requires the use of natural resources for long-term usage. It also implies withstanding difficulties and challenges. United Nations Brundtland Commission in 1987, defined sustainability as “meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” Sustainability in business refers to using durable materials in the manufacturing process. It is broadly used to indicate programs, initiatives, and actions aimed at preserving particular resources; this refers to four distinct areas, which are human, social, economic, and environmental—known as the four pillars of sustainability.

Three important well-known accepted businesses are the triple bottom line of sustainable business, called the three P' (<https://www.futurelearn.com/sustainable-business/steps>). Sustainability has the role of protecting and maximizing the benefit of the 3Ps- People, Planet, and Profit. In this study, the researcher is interested in the first 'P' of the People. Sustainability, in this regard, indicates the initiatives employed by businessmen and women to preserve their businesses for a very long period. Four distinct areas: human, social, economic, and environmental, known as the four pillars of sustainability are concerned (<https://www.futurelearn.com/sustainable-business/steps>) in attaining sustainability in businesses. This involves sourcing sustainable ingredients, using packaging solutions and resources mindfully, with eco-friendly practices (..... 2024)

Bread has become a staple food in Nigeria ever since its first introduction. History has it that it was introduced in Nigeria in the nineteenth century by freed slaves returning to Lagos from Brazil (Okafor, 2010). However, commercial baking began in about the 1920s, due to technical innovations introduced by the bread king, Amos Shackleford who introduced a kneading device known as dough brake and the wholesale system. The growth of the bread business in Nigeria was aided by African Home and Foreign industries, Sterling Brothers Baking Company, (Okafor, 2010). Since the industry has continued to grow. Apart from being taken as breakfast in many homes, bread is a gift item, which is purchased for children and even adults as a gift after a trip. However, the bread industry, which is one of the largest food processing industries in the country, with bread and biscuit (referred to as ‘moist and dry’ outputs respectively) accounting for 82 percent of their outputs, (Kehinde, 2023). Recently, bread manufacturers have been facing challenges with high levels of competition (Onwumere et al., (2012) thus, requiring a sustainable practice for survival.

Statement of the Problem:

Economic and food crises in Nigeria also affected the bread industry, especially in Awka, with the rising cost of raw materials due to the steady increase of foreign exchange in the past few years. Njoku & Kalu (2015), observed that low profit margins as a result of high cost of production, infrastructural deficit, high operation cost, exchange rate volatility, and stiff competition also bedevil the industry. Njoku & Kalu, (2015), also pointed out that flour, a byproduct, (97% wheat), the main raw material used for the production of Bread in Nigeria, is imported. Consequently, some bakeries fizzle out within a short period of their establishment (Onwumere, Nwosu & Nmesirionye 2012). This scenario suggests that all is not well in the industry lamented (Kehinde, 2023), especially in Awka, which is the capital of Anambra state, where dwellers thrive mostly on businesses for survival. Bread baking has continued to increase probably due to an increase in bread consumption in the state. However, the industry is dominated by small-scale bakers who find it difficult to source foreign exchange for their bakeries, thus sustainability of the industry becomes imperative. The purpose of this study is to explore sustainability business practices in bread industries, that influence customer behaviors in Awka in Anambra state.

Research Questions:

The following research questions guided this study;

1. What sustainable practices are adopted by bread manufacturers to promote customers' purchasing interests in Awka?
2. What strategies adopted by manufacturers in Awka, sustain customers' interest in bread purchasing?
3. To what extent do the business practices of bread manufacturers sustain customers' purchasing decisions in Awka?

Hypotheses:

The following hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance, to guide the study.

- Ho₁:** There is no significant difference between male and female; old and new Bread respondents on how sustainable practices promote customers' purchasing interests in Awka.
- Ho₂:** There is no significant difference between male and female; old and new bread respondents, on the strategies adopted by manufacturers that sustain customers' interest in bread industries in Awka.
- Ho₃:** There is no significant difference between male and female; old and new Bread respondents on the extent the business practices in bread industries influence customers' purchasing decisions.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

Literature was reviewed under conceptual, theoretical frameworks, and empirical studies.

Conceptual framework: The study is framed on the following according to the variables:

Concept of customer behavior: Consumer behavior is an important topic in business practices and is concerned with consumers' decision-making process in acquiring, consuming, and adopting the needed products and services. Consumer Behaviour, often referred to as consumer buying behavior has to do with buying products or services for one's personal use or consumption, (Olaide, 2023). This action is usually influenced by a lot of factors. According to the American Marketing Association (AMA), Consumer behavior is the dynamic interaction of cognition, behavior, and environmental events by which human beings conduct the exchange aspect of their lives. As much as consumers' behavior is important in marketing activities, their emotional state determines their buying behaviors (Ajayi, 2019). This is probably why Oladele (2019), conceived consumer behavior as a multi-disciplinary subject, which examines the decision process in the form of activities of consumers in their consummation roles. This study adopted the concept that Consumer behavior implies how customers select, buy, use, and dispose of ideas, goods, and services to satisfy their needs and wants (Manuere, Chikazhe and Josphat, 2022). In this case, it is about individuals selecting, and using their ideas to purchase bread for consumption or retailing.

Concept of Sustainability: There are several concepts of sustainability depending on the perception of the author, for instance, Kuhlman & Farrington (2010) perceive sustainability as encompassing three dimensions, social, economic, and environmental. This study conceives sustainability as the ability to withstand difficulties and survive amid challenges.

Theoretical framework: Theoretical Framework: This study is framed on the following consumer behavior theoretical models as follows; Factors That Influence Consumer Behaviour and Maslow's Theory of Motivation.

- **Factors That Influence Consumer Behaviour:**

Customers are the main reasons for the existence and continuity of all businesses globally. Wandera & Sharma (2018), identified internal and external factors that mainly influence consumer behaviors before, during, and after purchases. Internal Factors are factors that result from different dimensions within the context of the consumer in the area of culture, and personal aspects as well as customer loyalty which have influences on consumer behaviors, such as culture, and customer loyalty.

External factors are those beyond the consumer's control regarding decisions on the products and services. However, such changes can result due to society's needs through, social media, crisis, and motivational impacts. This study on customer behavior and sustainable business practices: the case of bread industries recognizes the role of the external and internal factors in sustaining customers' interest in sustainability in the bread industry and will articulate them in this study.

- **Maslow's Theory of Motivation:** propounded by Abraham Maslow (1943), in his paper, titled "A Theory of Human Motivation," points out that human actions are motivated by certain psychological and physiological needs that progress from basic to complex, in a hierarchical order needs as follows; Basic physiological Needs, which trigger the consumer to buy food, drinks, and other consumable food to remove hunger and thirst; Safety Needs, which results after satisfying the above needs, the consumer becomes concerned about his safety, security, and stability; Love/Social Needs: The consumer will seek for love and try to be identified with a group; Esteem/Ego Needs: This makes the consumer buy luxury or exotic products as a sign of success and prestige and Self-Actualization: this leads to the consumers' personal development and individuality.

This study appreciates that the marketing concept is all about needs, therefore, it is important to explore the dynamics that the consumer needs bread, thus the changes in their behaviors towards continued and increased demand for bread, despite the fight for sustainability of the industry is the concern of this study.

Empirical Studies: Empirical studies reviewed include, Studies on Consumer Behaviour, Studies on Sustainability, and Studies in Bread manufacturing business.

- **Studies on Consumer Behaviour**

Latuszynska, Furaji & Wawrzyniak, (2012) study, 'An Empirical Study of Factors Influencing Consumer Behaviour in Electric Appliances Market aimed to determine the factors affecting consumer preferences and behaviour in the electric appliances market in Iraq. The data obtained from the questionnaire was analyzed. The major findings of the study indicated that, overall, the set of independent variables is weakly associated with the dependent variable. However, the in-depth analysis found that social factors, physical factors, and marketing mix elements are strongly associated with consumer buying behavior.

Koyluoglu, (2022), 'An Empirical Study of the Effect of Online Comments on Consumer Buying Behavior' was carried out at Selcuk University with a random sampling method using a Google survey to select 400 participants, including academics, university staff, and students. The SPSS 22.0 program was used in the analysis of the collected data. Pearson correlation and multiple regression analyses were used because the scale used in the study was a normal distribution and parametric tests were used. As a result, it was observed that as the positive perspective of the participants on consumer comments increased, buying behavior also increased. However, no significant relationship was found between attitude toward comments and buying behavior ($p > 0.05$).

Manuere, Chikazhe and Josphat, (2022). In their 'Theoretical models of consumer behavior: A literature review,' presented the evolution of theories that have uniquely influenced consumer buying decision processes. Marketers use theories of consumer behavior to explain how consumers behave and to segment the market for consumers. Marketers use several theories of consumer behavior, namely, traditional theories and contemporary theories. Traditional theories are based on economic principles or experiences of marketers, whereas modern theories are associated with empirical results. The theory of consumer behavior is an explanation of facts in an orderly manner. However, not all theories of consumer behavior are good or sound. A sound theory of consumer behavior describes both behavior and the nature of the behavior. Thus, consumer behavior theories are used to understand and predict the behavior of consumers. To that end, this study used two important groups of theories, namely, the Buyer Behaviour theory and the theories of reasoned action. These theories will help us to research different aspects of consumer behavior.

Therefore the strengths and weaknesses of these theories are documented.

Studies on Sustainability:

Rev. UFSM, Naline, Zanin, Dalmutt, and Magro, (2022), aim to examine the efficiency of sustainability practices in industries in Chapecó-Santa Catarina. The research employed a descriptive, conducted through a survey with 63 companies. The questionnaires administered show the perception of top managers concerning the economic-financial, social, and environmental dimensions. A quantitative approach and information entropy analysis were used with ranking by TOPSIS. The study shows that companies have not yet realized that natural resources are scarce, and their leaders are not committed to sustainable management, which would provide evidence of the efficiency of business practices with sustainable development.

Iheanachor, (2021). investigates the sustainable business practices of Nigerian organizations, to examine sustainability practices of businesses from selected industries; construction, manufacturing, banking, and hospitality - were selected based on the availability of sustainability reports of industry leaders. This research aims to help business managers and policymakers understand sustainable business practices and their implications on business performance. This study is related to the current research in the fact that both investigated sustainable business practices of Nigerian organizations, aiming at helping business managers and policymakers understand sustainable business practices and their implications on business performance but while this study focused on banking and hospitality industries, mine dwelt on bread industries to discover how and the impact on customer behavior.

Hang, Nguyet, Nguyen, and Tognetti, (2018), Thesis aims to understand and assess how companies integrate sustainability thinking through sustainable business practices and customers' engagement in the Swedish coffee industry. Using a qualitative research method, a case study of Löfbergs, including interviews with managers, customers, focus groups with young consumers, and observations at Löfbergs' Café Bar, they found that the company places sustainability at the center of its business strategy. If a business succeeds in integrating sustainable thinking into its business practices, the results are higher engagement both on the customers' and stakeholders' sides. The study concluded that by shifting to transcendence as a business logic, the business can adopt a dialectic strategy and successfully integrate sustainability into its business practices. This study just like the current one is focused on integrating sustainability thinking through sustainable business practices and customer engagement; the current one deals only with customer behavior and sustainable business practices: in bread industries, again this study fixated on the Swedish coffee industry, while the current study area is in Awka, Anambra state. Nevertheless, both employed the same qualitative research method and a case study approach with interviews and focus group discussions. Although my study did not use interviews it adopted the use of questionnaires and focus group discussion.

Olaide, (2023) research focused on the impact of consumer behavior on sustainable development goals (goal 12) of the United Nations. It further investigates the consequent effects of consumer behavior on sustainable development. Data from this study were collected from 80 respondents through questionnaires and analyzed using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation and Statistical Packages for Social Sciences. Sustainable consumption practices were found to have a significant impact on sustainable development goals, the findings also support a positive influence of sustainable consumption reducing the absorption of natural resources and minimizing wastes of such resources. The study advocates implications for organizations regarding strengthening the practice of sustainable consumption to achieve sustainable development in society. Olaide, 2023 research is quite relevant to this study; but, unlike the current study, it focused on the impact of consumer behavior on the United Nations' sustainable development goals, different from customer behavior and sustainable business practices, which the current study investigated. However, the instruments and data collection methods were similar.

Mande & Taofeek (2022), studied 'Effect of Consumer Behaviour on Sustainable Development (A Case Study of Unilever Nigeria Plc)' using a descriptive research design as it required seeing and reporting employee behavior, attitudes, and activities as they were at the time of the study. The research was limited to a survey of Unilever Nigeria plc. A sample size of 80 was obtained from the 100 questionnaires distributed. The primary source of data was adopted using questionnaire items. Pearson Product Moment correlation analysis with statistical packages for social sciences (SPSS) was used.

Studies in Bread manufacturing business:

Ezezue et al, (2019) explored the 'Impact of Outsourcing on Productivity in Bakery Industry, Abakaliki Metropolis'. Consumers of bread in Abakaliki Metropolis regret the soaring unit price of the product which managers attribute to the increasing cost of outsourcing which results from an inflationary economic system. Three hypotheses were formulated to measure the relationship between outsourcing and operational labor cost, reject bread manufacture, and operational time. This study was based on transaction cost economics theory. The instrument was a questionnaire, while Spearman's correlation was used for data analysis. Results indicate that outsourcing increases efficient production by reducing the operational labor cost and labor time while minimizing the quantity of bread rejects. It is therefore recommended that the management of the bread industry in the city should intensify outsourcing as a means of reducing the unit price of bread and promote transaction cost economics decisions for greater productivity.

Adekoyeni and Abdulhamid (2020) in their study, 'Feasibility and Economic Analysis of Bread Production in Gashua, Yobe State, Nigeria' determined the viability, cost, and benefits associated with a bakery project before financial resources are allocated. The capital investment for the bakery establishment was estimated at ₦10,316,303.00 with a maximum capacity to utilize 10 bags of flour (50 kg) per day. The production capacity is to increase at 50, 60, 75, 85, and 90 mi efficiency for five years respectively. The cost of production ranged between ₦30,776,550 to 45,059,946.85 while the profit after tax ranged from ₦12,783,071 to 18,878,298.79 for five years. The noncurrent asset schedule annual depreciation was estimated at #655,000. The cash flow and breakeven point were ₦41,395,161 and 27,705 respectively. The bakery business in Gashua is worthwhile for entrepreneurs as a profit-making venture.

Udu & Offor (2017), investigated 'Technology Utilization and Organizational Productivity: A Study of Selected Bakery Firms in Abakaliki, Ebonyi State, Nigeria' to examine the nature of the relationship between technology utilization and productivity of bakery firms in Abakaliki, Ebonyi State. Using a correlational survey research design they established the degree of relationship between the studied variables. A structured questionnaire was administered to the sample of 164 respondents, out of which 160 copies of the questionnaire were returned and subsequently used for the analysis. The Pearson Correlation Coefficient was used to analyze the data. The study found that there is a significant negative relationship between the utilization of spiral mixer technology and the production time of bread processing of the bakery firms in Abakaliki, there is a significant negative relationship between the utilization of rotary rack oven technology and several employees involved in bread processing firms in Abakaliki and there is a significant positive relationship between utilization of blend molding machine and the quality of output of the bakery firms in Abakaliki. The result implies that technology utilization promotes efficiency in operations which results in enhanced competitive advantage in the market. From the findings, the study recommends that bakery firms have not yet utilized modern technology in their production processes.

Summary of Literature Reviewed:

This study reviewed two main concepts, Consumer behaviour and Sustainability. Consumer behavior in this study was adopted (Manuere, Chikazhe, and Josphat, 2022).) concept, indicating that consumer behavior implies how customers select, buy, use, and dispose of ideas, goods, and services to satisfy their needs and wants to purchase bread for consumption or retailing, Of the several concepts of sustainability, Kuhlman & Farrington (2010) idea was adopted as encompassing three dimensions, social, economic and environmental issues. Thus, it is seen as the ability to withstand difficulties and survive amid challenges be it social, economic, or environmental. The study is also framed on the consumer behavior theoretical models of Factors That Influence Consumer Behaviour and Maslow's Theory of Motivation. On the Empirical studies, 11 studies were reviewed including three studies on Consumer Behaviour, five studies on Sustainability, and three on Bread manufacturing business. However, out of these studies, none to the knowledge of the author is on 'Customer Behaviour And Sustainable Business Practices: Case of Bread Industries in Awka, Anambra State.' This is the lacuna filed by this study.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

Design of the Study: This study adopted a descriptive research design. This implies 'after the fact' because according to (Siedlecki, 2020), it is a structured method for gathering data from a sample of a population, using different approaches such as surveys, interviews, questionnaires, and observations. to describe the characteristics, without any form of control or manipulate of any variable, which are studied in their natural settings. This design is deemed appropriate for this study as it employed questionnaires to collect data, without controlling or manipulating any variable.

Area of the Study: The area of this study is Awka, the capital of Anambra state, which is in South-East Nigeria. The people of Awka are Igbos, known for their talent in business and industrialization. Awka is heavily populated and thus, the bread industry has a great opportunity to survive due to the high demand. The Bread industries in Awka are having hard times and thus seeking sustainable ways of survival like other businesses in Nigeria, especially in the South East.

Population of the Study: The population of this study consists of all 200 bakeries in Awka as of October 8, 2024 (Source: <https://rentechdigital.com/smartscraper/business-report-details/nigeria/anambra-state/list-of-bakeries-in-awka>).

Sample and Sampling Technique: There is no sampling as the entire population was used due to the fewness of the number.

Instruments for Data Collection: The instruments used for data collection are a questionnaire titled 'Customers Behaviour and Sustainable Business Practices in Bread Industries Questionnaire (CBSBPBIQ) and a Focus Group Discussion. The CBSBPBIQ is structured on a 4-point Likert-type rating scale with options of; SA- Strongly Disagree; A- Agree; D-Disagree; SD - Strongly Disagree and VLE- Very Large Extent; LE- Large Extent; SE- Small Extent; VSE- Very Small Extent and weighted 4, 3, 2 and 1 respectively. It has two sections, A and B. Section A, with three items designed to collect the demographics of the respondents, while Section B with three clusters and 26 items collected data for answering the research questions. The Focus Group Discussion consists of three research questions.

Validation of the Instrument: Three experts who validated the instrument ascertained the appropriateness and clarity of the items of the instruments to ensure the items measured what they purported to measure. Their comments, suggestions, and observations were considered in the production of the final draft of the instruments. (App I).

Reliability of the Instrument: The questionnaire was trial tested through a pilot study on five bakeries with 20 respondents from Enugu state, outside the study area. The internal consistency of the instrument was computed using the Cronbach Alpha method which yielded 0.86 for the entire instrument, which was therefore considered reliable enough for the study.

Method of Data Collection: The study employed a face-to-face administration strategy in which the researcher with his well-trained research assistants directly collected the data from the respondents, which lasted for one week with a high return rate of 100%. The Focus Group Discussion was conducted at the Association of Bakeries meeting at Awka. The researcher was given 25 minutes to discuss with the respondents available at the meeting.

Method of Data Analysis: The data collected were analyzed using means and Standard Deviation. Decisions were arrived at using the criterion mean score of 2.50. This implies that Means below 2.50 were taken to indicate that the corresponding items were **NOT Accepted** by the respondents, while Means of 2.50 and above were taken to indicate that the corresponding items were **Accepted** for the same reason.

The results from the Interview and Focus Group Discussion were qualitatively analyzed.

For the hypotheses, for the sample over 30, according to Cleophas & Zwinderman (2016), analysis of Variance (ANOVA) or z-test should be used, whereas t-tests are most helpful with a smaller sample size below 30 ($n < 30$). However, both methods assume a normal distribution of the data but to them, z-tests are most useful when the standard deviation is known.

For the hypotheses' testing Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was adopted at 0.05 significance level. The significance level was determined with the P- table value about the significance level. This implies that when the P-value is below 0.05 significance level, there is a **Significant Difference** between the tested Means; therefore, the Null Hypotheses *were Not Accepted*. On the other hand, when the P-value is higher than 0.05, it implies that there is **No Significant Difference** between the means tested. Therefore, the Null Hypotheses was *Accepted*. Research question 3 requires a test of the **extent** practices of bread manufacturers influence customers' purchasing decisions, the real limits of Numbers will be used to arrive at decisions as follows;

- 3.50 - 0.05 = (VLE) Very Large Extent =
- 2.50 - 3.05 = (LE) Large Extent
- 1.50 - 2.05 = (SE) Small Extent
- 0.00 - 1.05 = (VSE) Very Small Extent

RESULTS:

Research Question One: *What sustainable practices are adopted by bread manufacturers to promote customers' purchasing interests in Awka?*

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation of the Sustainable Practices of Bread Manufacturers that promote customers' interest N=200				
S/No	Items	X	SD	Dec
1.	Innovations like adding fruits and vegetables.	0.66	0.19	NA
2.	Expanding distribution channels through sales agents	2.55	0.44	A
3.	Online marketing through social media platforms	3.42	0.28	A
4.	Direct sales to consumers	3.25	0.52	A
5.	Sales through retailers	3.42	0.43	A
6.	Door-to-door sales to homes, offices, and business areas	3.34	0.47	A
7.	Giving discounts to regular customers	3.27	0.50	A
8.	Compromising on raw materials to reduce the quantity and quality	0.74	0.48	NA
9.	Adding more ingredients to increase the quantity and quality	3.33	0.51	A
Research Question Two: <i>What strategies adopted by manufacturers in Awka, sustain customers' interest in bread purchasing?</i>				
Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation of the Strategies ADOPTED by manufacturers in Awka that sustain customers' interests in bread industries. N=200				
10.	Innovations like adding fruits and vegetables	1.97	0.36	NA
11.	Expanding distribution channels through sales age	2.95	0.43	A
12.	Online marketing through social media platforms	2.80	0.41	A
13.	Direct sales to consumers	3.14	0.42	A
14.	Sales through retailers	3.70	0.45	A
15.	Door-to-door sales to homes, offices, and business areas	3.23	0.50	A

16.	Giving discounts to regular customers	2.41	0.25	NA
17.	Compromising on raw materials to reduce the quantity and quality	1.20	0.51	NA
18.	Adding more ingredients to increase the quantity and quality	3.72	0.27	A
Research Question Three: <i>To what extent do the business practices of bread manufacturers sustain customers' purchasing decisions in Awka?</i>				
Table 3: Mean and Standard Deviation of the Extent the sustainable business practices in bread industries sustain customers' purchasing decisions. N=200				
19.	Innovations like adding fruits and vegetables	3.30	0.51	LE
20.	Expanding distribution channels through sales agents	3.00	0.36	LE
21.	Online marketing through social media platforms	2.48	0.34	SE
22.	Direct sales to consumers	3.20	0.51	LE
23.	Door-to-door sales to homes, offices, and business areas	3.17	0.48	LE
24.	Giving discounts to regular customers	3.29	0.46	LE
25.	Compromising on raw materials. to reduce the quantity and quality	1.63	0.19	SE
26.	Adding more ingredients to increase the quantity and quality	3.39	0.52	LE
27.	CLUSTER MEAN/ SD	2.93	0.35	LE

Research Question One: *What sustainable practices are adopted by bread manufacturers to promote customers' purchasing interests in Awka?*

Table 1 shows the mean and standard deviation of the sustainable practices of bread manufacturers that *promote* customers' interest. According to the table, items 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 9 have their means above the 2.50 criterion mean. Therefore, the table shows that the respondents Accept the following as the sustainable practices of bread manufacturers that *promote* customers' interests, *Expanding distribution channels through sales agents; Online marketing through social media platforms; Direct sales to consumers; Sales through retailers; Door-to-door sales to homes, offices and business areas; Giving discounts to regular customers; and Adding more ingredients to increase the quantity and quality.* The standard deviation scores show homogeneity in the responses.

Results from the Focus Group Discussion: The outcome of the Focus Group Discussion with the manufacturers shows that several practices were adopted, including exploring different channels of distribution and sales such as house-to-house, online marketing, social media groups, and giving discounts. They did not accept that they compromise on the ingredients to make profits instead they claim that they add more to increase the quantity and quality. They noted that much profit is no longer made from bread production due to the high cost of raw materials, which has resulted in the closure of many industries in Awka. They indicated that sustainability in the business lies on y =the quantity of sales made and so efforts are made to sell as many as possible.

Research Question Two: *What strategies adopted by manufacturers in Awka, sustain customers' interest in bread purchasing?*

Table 2 indicates the Mean and Standard Deviation of the Strategies *Adopted* by manufacturers in Awka that *sustain customers' interests* in bread industries. According to the table, items 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, and 18, have their means above 2.50 criterion mean. The table shows that the respondents Accept the following as the Strategies *Adopted* by manufacturers in Awka that *sustain customers' interests* in bread industries; *Expanding distribution channels through sales agents; Online marketing through social media platforms; Direct sales to consumers; Sales through retailers; Door-to-door sales to homes, offices and business areas; Adding more ingredients to increase the quantity and quality.* The Standard Deviation scores show homogeneity in the responses.

Results from the Focus Group Discussion; To sustain customers; interest is paramount in the business, they observed. This explains why effort is made to improve the quality and quantity and expand marketing channels. Most of them convey bread to the customers with their vehicles to save them the trouble of transportation. That is why they do door-to-door sales. They also employ packaging that will not add too much cost to the bread.

Table 4: Summary of ANOVA Analysis of significant differences between male and female; old and new bread manufacturers on how sustainable practices promote customers' purchasing interests in Awka.

Source	Statistical tool Used	F-Ratio	P-Value	Level of Sig	Decision
Hypothesis One: There is no significant difference between male and female; old and new Bread respondents on how sustainable practices promote customers' purchasing interests in Awka.	Analysis of variance (ANOVA)	1.947	0.193	0.05	Accept HO ₁
Hypothesis Two: There is no significant difference between male and female; old and new bread respondents, on the strategies adopted by manufacturers that sustain customers' interest in bread industries in Awka	Analysis of variance (ANOVA)	1.822	0.098	0.05	Accept HO ₂
Hypothesis Three: There is no significant difference among male and female; old and new Bread respondents on the extent the business practices in bread industries influence customers' purchasing decisions.	Analysis of variance (ANOVA)	1.785	0.121	0.05	Accept HO ₃

Summary of Findings:

Research Question One: *What sustainable practices are adopted by bread manufacturers to promote customers' purchasing interests in Awka?*

Finding One: The sustainable practices of bread manufacturers that *promote* customers' interests are:

- Expanding distribution channels through sales agents (x=2.55)
- Online marketing through social media platforms (x=3.42);
- Direct sales to consumers (x=3.25);
- Sales through retailers (x=3.42);
- Door-to-door sales to homes, offices, and business areas (x=3.34);
- Giving discounts to regular customers (x=3.27)
- Adding more ingredients to increase the quantity and quality (x=3.33).

Research Question Two: *What strategies adopted by manufacturers in Awka, sustain customers' interest in bread purchasing?*

Finding Two: Strategies *Adopted* by manufacturers in Awka that *sustain* customers' interests in bread industries are;

- Expanding distribution channels through sales agents (x=2.95);
- Online marketing through social media platforms (x=2.80);
- Direct sales to consumers (x=3.14);
- Sales through retailers (x=3.70);
- Door-to-door sales to homes, offices, and business areas (x=3.23);
- Adding more ingredients to increase the quantity and quality (x=3.72).

Research Question Three: *To what extent do the business practices of bread manufacturers sustain customers' purchasing decisions in Awka?*

Finding Three: The business practices of bread manufacturers sustain customers' purchasing decisions in Awka to a Large Extent (2.93).

Hypothesis One: *There is no significant difference between male and female; old and new Bread respondents on how sustainable practices promote customers' purchasing interests in Awka.*

Finding Four: HO₁ Accepted- There is no significant difference between male and female; old and new Bread respondents on how sustainable practices promote customers' purchasing interests in Awka.

Hypothesis Two: *There is no significant difference between male and female; old and new bread respondents, on the strategies adopted by manufacturers that sustain customers' interest in bread industries in Awka.*

Finding Five: HO₂ Accepted- There is no significant difference between male and female; old and new bread respondents, on the strategies adopted by manufacturers that sustain customers' interest in bread industries in Awka.

Hypothesis Three: *There is no significant difference among male and female; old and new Bread respondents on the extent the business practices in bread industries influence customers' purchasing decisions.*

Finding Six: HO₃ Accepted- There is no significant difference between male and female; old and new Bread respondents on the extent the business practices in bread industries influence customers' purchasing decisions.

DISCUSSIONS: Discussions are presented in line with the research questions that guide the study.

What sustainable practices are adopted by bread manufacturers to promote customers' purchasing interests in Awka?

It was found that the bread manufacturers adopt several sustainable practices that cushion the difficulties and prizes of bread for the customers, such as online marketing through social media platforms, sales through retailers, adding more ingredients to increase the quantity and quality, and direct sales to consumers involving door-to-door sales to homes, offices, and business areas. These practices are very encouraging, especially taking the bread to the customers thereby avoiding the middlemen business of wholesalers. Also, the idea of adding more ingredients is interesting, contrary to the opinion of many that the raw materials are compromised to reduce quality and quantity. However, these struggles and sustainable practices seem to limit the growth and development of bread industries in Awka. Anudu (2017) observed that even though the industry is worth about \$421M, it is dominated by small-scale bakers, which suggests that all is still not well in the bakery industry. No significant differences exist between the respondents showing that the responses of males, females new and old manufacturers are homogeneous in this respect.

What strategies adopted by manufacturers in Awka, sustain customers' interest in bread purchasing?

To sustain customers' interest in bread purchasing, manufacturers in Awka adopt several strategies including adding more ingredients to increase the quantity and quality, and sales through retailers, such as direct sales to consumers, involving door-to-door sales to homes, offices, and business areas. This explains why most bread manufacturers convey bread directly to retailers in their vans and no longer wait for them to come and cue in the bakeries. The result of no significant difference among males, females new and old manufacturers indicates their homogeneity in this respect. This study supports that of Li et al., 2006 who observed that effective management of these dimensions could lead bakery firms in South-East, Nigeria to achieve some level of sustainable competitive advantage, which can create a differential position over its rival in the business (Veerendrakumar & Shivashankar, 2015).

To what extent do the business practices of bread manufacturers sustain customers' purchasing decisions in Awka?

That the study found these business practices sustain customers' purchasing decisions to a large extent is not surprising.

These practices have made it possible for bread to still be available in high demand despite the high increase in foreign exchange, the high cost of imported and local materials, and other problems confronting manufacturers and customers. This implies that the study encourages supply chain management, which involves delivering products to customers starting from sourcing of raw materials to the delivery of the product to the final consumer, that has been proven to be effective in achieving competitive advantage in many sectors of economies of different countries (Manuere, Chikazhe and Josphat, 2022). Onwumere, Nwosu & Nmesirionye (2012) observe that the bakery industry is characterized by the rising of one enterprise and the falling of others, noting that some bakery firms fizzle out within a short period of their establishment. This study has shown that this can be avoided if the manufacturers practice sustainability in the business. It is quite interesting to observe that no significant differences exist among males, females, and new and old manufacturers, indicating that their opinions are consistent in this respect.

Conclusion: It was concluded that the business practices of bread manufacturers sustain customer behaviors and the bread industries in Awka.

Implications of the Study:

1. The findings imply that customer behaviors can be influenced by sustainable business practices not only in the bread industries in Awka but also in other businesses elsewhere.
2. Sustainable practices that reduce prices, such as direct sales to consumers promote customers' purchasing interests.
3. Supply chain management can sustain customers' interests in continued demand for a commodity.
4. Continued increases in the quantity and quality of a commodity no matter the situation can sustain customers' positive purchasing decisions.

Recommendations: Based on the findings the study recommends that;

1. The government should endeavor to reduce the problems of foreign exchange, high-cost imported and local materials, and other challenges confronting manufacturers and customers to help them in their sustainability struggles.
2. Manufacturers should continue direct sales to consumers as a survival strategy and promotion of supply chain management.
3. Bread manufacturers should try to be more innovative and apply technology.
4. Manufacturers should explore online marketing of bread.

Suggestions for Further Studies:

1. The study should be replicated in other states in Nigeria as bread is a staple food enjoyed by all Nigerians.
2. Further studies should be carried out on supply chain management in bread industries.
3. As the search for sustainability strategies for the bread industry by industrialists and academics continues, more studies should be conducted on ways to overcome threats to sustainability in bread and other products in Nigeria.
4. Studies should be conducted on competitive advantages to enable bread industries in Awka to create a differential position over its rivals in the business, to achieve sustainable competitive advantage.

Contributions to Knowledge.

1. The finding is an eye-opener to other businesses, especially those on the verge of collapse. They can leverage the sustainable practices of bread manufacturers to promote customers' interests in their various firms.
2. The study has equipped businesses with some consumer behavior practices to leverage for a competitive advantage.
3. The study has provided literature for researchers interested in a similar survey.

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APPI: Customers Behaviour and Sustainable Business Practices in Bread Industries Questionnaire (CBSBPBIQ)

To Respondents:

I am a student at Learn to Live Business School (LLBS), studying for my MBA degree program. I'm glad to inform you that you have been selected for this study, thus being a participant in this study CONGRATULATIONS! You are therefore kindly requested to be very honest in your comments. Kindly be informed that there are no implications whatsoever on your responses, which will be used for research purposes only. Also, there are no right or wrong answers just be honest in your opinions. There are four options kindly **TICK** only one but ensure you answer **ALL** the questions and use the following options:

SA = Strongly Disagree

A = Agree

D = Disagree

SD = Strongly Disagree

Or

VLE= Very Large Extent

LE= Large Extent

SE= Small Extent

VSE= Very Small Extent

Thank You Very much

Obialo Theo Chinonso

SECTION 1: RESPONDENTS' DEMOGRAPHICS:

1. Gender: Male Female

2. Job Title: Employer Employee

3. No. Of years in the Industry : Below 5 years 5 – 10 years Above 10 years

SECTION 2:

S/N	Cluster A: Sustainable Practices of Bread Manufacturers that <i>promote customers' interests</i> in Awka				
Indicate your level of Agreement and Disagreement on the following		SA	A	D	SD
1.	Innovations like adding fruits and vegetables				
2.	Expanding distribution channels through sales agents				
3.	Online marketing through social media platforms				
4.	Direct sales to consumers				
5.	Sales through retailers				
6.	Door-to-door sales to homes, offices, and business areas				
7.	Giving discounts to regular customers				
8.	Compromising on raw materials to reduce the quantity and quality				
9.	Adding more ingredients to increase the quantity and quality				
Cluster B: Strategies ADOPTED by manufacturers in Awka that <i>sustain customers' interests</i> in bread industries.					
Indicate your level of Agreement or Disagreement with the following statements.					
10.	Innovations like adding fruits and vegetables				
11.	Expanding distribution channels through sales agents				
12.	Online marketing through social media platforms				
13.	Direct sales to consumers				
14.	Sales through retailers				
15.	Door-to-door sales to homes, offices, and business areas				
16.	Giving discounts to regular customers				
17.	Compromising on raw materials to reduce the quantity and quality				
18.	Adding more ingredients to increase the quantity and quality				
Cluster C: Extent the sustainable business practices in bread industries to sustain customers' purchasing decisions.					
Indicate EXTENT these Business Practices in Bread Industries <u>sustain</u> Customers' Purchasing Decisions.		VL E	LE	SE	VSE

19.	Innovations like adding fruits and vegetables				
20.	Expanding distribution channels through sales agents				
21.	Online marketing through social media platforms				
22.	Direct sales to consumers				
23.	Door-to-door sales to homes, offices, and business areas				
24.	Giving discounts to regular customers				
25.	Compromising on raw materials. to reduce the quantity and quality				
26.	Adding more ingredients to increase the quantity and quality				

APP II: Customers Behaviour and Sustainable Business Practices in Bread Industries Foccus Group Discussion Guide:

1. **What sustainable practices are used by bread manufacturers to promote customers' purchasing interests in Awka?**
2. **What strategies adopted by manufacturers in Awka, sustain customers' interest in bread purchasing?**
3. **To what extent do the business practices of bread manufacturers sustain customers' purchasing decisions in Awka?**