



# Survey of Consumer Awareness on Quality Assessment of Snacks and Pasta Products in Sokoto State, Nigeria.

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## ABSTRACT

This study examines consumer demographics, purchasing behaviors, awareness, and perceptions of snacks and pasta in Sokoto, highlighting key trends and areas for improvement. Survey results revealed that respondents were predominantly aged 18–45 (82.3%), with males (59.8%) slightly outnumbering females. Students (41.9%) and middle-income earners (46.0%) formed the majority, underscoring the appeal of these products to young and economically active demographics. Daily purchases were common (54.7%), but awareness of quality standards was low, with 45.0% of respondents unaware of regulations and 55.4% never checking nutritional labels. These findings indicate a significant gap in consumer education on food safety and product quality. Perceived quality was largely negative, with 55.1% rating snacks and pasta as poor and 67.2% encountering substandard or expired products. Price (34.6%) and expiry date (31.1%) were the primary determinants of quality, reflecting a reliance on accessible cues over informed evaluations. Preferences favored familiar products, with biscuits (88.1%), cakes (85.4%), and chips (81.4%) leading snacks, and noodles (93.9%) dominating pasta. Social media emerged as the primary information source (71.3%), though 66.2% of respondents remained skeptical of marketing claims. These findings emphasize the need for improved consumer education on quality standards, stricter regulatory enforcement, and transparent labeling. Stakeholders must address quality control issues and leverage digital platforms to engage and inform consumers. Enhancing trust and product reliability can bridge the gap between consumer expectations and market realities, fostering a more informed and loyal consumer base.

## INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the snack and pasta markets have seen a remarkable surge in popularity across Nigeria, particularly in Sokoto State. As consumer preferences shift towards convenience and taste, it is imperative to evaluate the quality and safety of these food products available in the region. This survey aims to investigate the incidence of various snacks and pastas marketed in Sokoto, focusing on consumer awareness regarding their quality (Salau *et al.*, 2017).

Consumer awareness plays a pivotal role in ensuring public health and safety, especially in an era characterized by a diverse range of food options. Understanding how well consumers are informed about the quality of snacks and pastas can help identify gaps in knowledge that may affect their purchasing decisions (Tam *et al.*, 2006; James *et al.*, 2007).

The increasing consumption of snacks and pastas in Sokoto State has raised significant concerns regarding the quality and safety of these food products. Despite their popularity, there is limited empirical data on the incidence of substandard or unhealthy options available to consumers. Many products in the market lack adequate labeling, transparency regarding ingredients, and compliance with safety standards, leading to potential health risks for consumers.

Moreover, Ezekiel *et al.* (2012) find out that, consumer awareness regarding the quality of snacks and pastas is often insufficient. Many individuals may lack knowledge about how to evaluate food products effectively, including understanding nutritional information, identifying additives, and recognizing reputable brands. This gap in awareness can lead to uninformed purchasing decisions, which may contribute

to health issues such as obesity, diabetes, and other diet related diseases (Akinyele, 1992; Salau *et al.*, 2017).

Additionally, the absence of comprehensive research on consumer perceptions and preferences in Sokoto limits the ability of manufacturers and regulatory bodies to implement effective quality control measures. Without a clear understanding of the current state of consumer awareness and product quality, stakeholders are unable to address these challenges effectively.

Furthermore, the findings from this survey will provide valuable insights for manufacturers, regulatory agencies, and public health officials, fostering improvements in product quality and safety standards. By examining the intersection of consumer behavior and product quality in the snacks and pasta markets, this research aims to contribute to a better understanding of consumer preferences and their implications for the food industry in Sokoto. To evaluate the level of consumer awareness regarding the quality of snacks and pasta products marketed in Sokoto State, Nigeria.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

### Research Design

A mixed method approach, combining quantitative and qualitative methods, was used. This allowed for a detailed understanding of consumer awareness levels and perceptions as well as an assessment of the quality of snacks and pasta products.

### Study Population

Consumers: Residents of Sokoto State who regularly purchased and consumed snacks and pasta products.

Retailers: Shop owners, vendors, and supermarkets selling these products in Sokoto State.

Manufacturers and Regulatory Authorities: Producers and officials involved in the quality regulation and control of these food items.

### Sampling Techniques

Sampling Method: A stratified random sampling technique was employed to ensure representation from urban, semi urban, and rural areas of Sokoto State.

Sample Size: The sample size was determined using statistical methods to ensure reliability and validity, targeting 300 participants, including consumers and retailers.

### Data Collection Methods

- Structured questionnaires were administered to consumers to assess their awareness of quality indicators (e.g., labeling, expiration dates, and nutritional information).
- The questions included both closed ended and open ended items.
- Interviews
- Semi structured interviews were conducted with key stakeholders such as retailers and regulatory officials to gather qualitative insights on challenges and trends in product quality.
- Product Sampling and Laboratory Analysis
- Randomly selected snacks and pasta products from local markets underwent laboratory testing to assess compliance with quality standards, such as nutritional content, microbial safety, and packaging integrity.

### Data Analysis

Quantitative Data: Descriptive and inferential statistical analyses were performed using SPSS tools to identify trends and correlations. Qualitative Data: Thematic analysis was conducted to interpret interview data and provide deeper insights into perceptions and challenges.

## RESULTS

The survey revealed that respondents were primarily middle aged, with 31.0% aged 36–45, followed closely by those aged 18–25 (28.2%) and 26–35 (23.1%). This age distribution suggests that the study captured insights from a broad but economically active demographic. Gender representation was slightly skewed, with males comprising 59.8% of respondents, females accounting for 38.9%, and 1.4% choosing not to disclose their gender. Regarding occupation, students represented the largest group (41.9%), highlighting a significant youth

and academic presence. This was followed by employed (24.0%) and self employed (14.9%) individuals, while unemployed (10.8%) and retired (8.5%) respondents formed smaller segments.

Household income levels predominantly ranged between ₦20,000 and ₦100,000, with 46.0% earning ₦20,000–₦50,000 and 40.2% earning ₦50,000–₦100,000. This indicates that most respondents belong to middle income households, providing insights into purchasing power within this socioeconomic bracket.

**Table 1: Demographic Distribution of Survey Respondents by Age, Gender, Occupation, and Household Income**

Question	Response Options	Responses (%)
Age	Under 18	11 (3.7%)
	18–25	83 (28.2%)
	26–35	68 (23.1%)
	36–45	91 (31.0%)
	46 and above	44 (15.0%)
Gender	Male	177(59.8%)
	Female	115 (38.9%)
	Prefer not to say	04 (1.4%)
Occupation	Student	124 (41.9%)
	Employed	71 (24.0%)
	Self employed	44 (14.9%)
	Unemployed	32 (10.8%)
	Retired	25 (8.5%)
Household Income (monthly)	Less than ₦20,000	18(6.2%)
	₦20,000–₦50,000	136(46.0%)
	₦50,000–₦100,000	119(40.2%)
	Above ₦100,000	22(7.5%)

A significant proportion of respondents (54.7%) purchase snacks and pasta daily, with 30.1% buying weekly. This underscores the importance of these products as staples in daily diets. Despite this frequent consumption, 45.0% of respondents admitted to being unaware of quality standards and regulations for snacks and pasta in Nigeria. Only 36.5% were fully aware, while 18.5% had partial awareness, indicating a notable gap in consumer knowledge.

When asked about the role of quality in purchasing decisions, 43.0% rated it as important, while 15.4% deemed it very important. However, 27.7% remained neutral, and 13.9% did not prioritize quality. Interestingly, over half of the respondents (55.4%) never check product labels for nutritional information or ingredients, with only 24.0% doing so always or

occasionally. This highlights a lack of consumer engagement with product details, which could affect their ability to make informed choices.

**Table 2: Consumer Awareness, Purchasing Frequency, and Quality Considerations for Snacks and Pasta in Sokoto**

Question	Response Options	Responses
How often do you purchase snacks and pasta?	Daily	162(54.7%)
	Weekly	89(30.1%)
	Monthly	13(4.4%)
	Occasionally	22(7.4%)
	Never	10(3.4%)
Are you aware of the quality standards and regulations for snacks and pasta in Nigeria?	Yes	108(36.5%)
	No	133(45.0%)
	Somewhat	50(18.5%)
How important is the quality of snacks and pasta in your purchasing decision?	Very important	46(15.4%)
	Important	127(43.0%)
	Neutral	82(27.7%)
	Not important	41(13.9%)
Do you check labels for ingredients or nutritional information before buying snacks or pasta?	Always	27(9.1%)
	Sometimes	44(14.9%)
	Rarely	61(20.6%)
	Never	164(55.4%)

The perceived quality of snacks and pasta in Sokoto received predominantly negative feedback, with 55.1% of respondents rating it as poor. Only 12.5% considered the quality to be excellent. Furthermore, 67.2% of respondents reported encountering substandard or expired products in the market, suggesting significant quality control issues.

When asked about factors influencing their perception of product quality, price (34.6%) and expiry date (31.1%) were the most commonly cited, followed by taste (14.8%) and nutritional value (6.4%). Packaging and brand reputation were less influential. Interestingly, 68.3% of respondents believed that the prices of snacks and pasta reflect their quality, indicating a strong association between cost and perceived value.

**Table 3: Consumer Perceptions of Quality, Safety, and Pricing of Snacks and Pasta in Sokoto**

Question	Response Options	Responses
How would you rate the quality of the snacks and pasta available in Sokoto?	Excellent	37(12.5%)
	Good	56(18.9%)
	Average	40(13.5%)
	Poor	163(55.1%)
Have you ever encountered substandard or expired snacks or pasta in the market?	Yes	199(67.2%)
	No	97(32.8%)
What factors do you consider when determining the quality of snacks or pasta?	Packaging,	22(7.4%)
	Brand reputation,	19(6.4%)
	Taste,	44(14.8%)
	Nutritional value,	92(31.1%)
	Price,	102(34.6%)
Expiry date	17(5.7%)	
Do you think the prices of snacks and pasta in Sokoto reflect their quality?	Yes	202(68.3%)
	No	88(29.7%)
	Not sure	06(2.0%)

Consumer preferences revealed a clear inclination toward certain snack types, with biscuits (88.1%), cakes (85.4%), and chips (81.4%) being the most popular. Similarly, noodles emerged as the dominant choice among pasta types, with 93.9% of respondents indicating a preference for them. Spaghetti (67.2%) and macaroni (52.7%) also had significant followings, while other pasta types such as couscous (32.4%) were less frequently purchased.

**Table 4: Consumer Preferences for Snack and Pasta Types in Sokoto**

Question	Response Options	Responses
What types of snacks do you usually purchase?	Chips	241(81.4%)
	Crackers	11(3.7%)
	Biscuits	261(88.1%)
	Puff puff	221(74.6%)
	Cakes	253(85.4%)
	Nuts	167(56.4%)
	Others	23(7.7%)
What types of pasta do you usually purchase?	Spaghetti	199(67.2%)
	Macaroni	156(52.7%)
	Noodles	278(93.9%)
	Couscous	96(32.4%)
	Others	55(18.5%)

Social media was identified as the leading source of information on new snack and pasta products, with

71.3% of respondents citing it as their primary channel. Television advertisements (31.0%) and radio (22.3%) were less impactful. When asked about their likelihood of trying new products based on advertisements, 43.6% indicated they were likely or very likely to do so, while 33.2% were neutral or unlikely. Despite these responses, a majority of respondents (66.2%) believed that marketing does not influence their perception of product quality, suggesting a level of skepticism toward advertising claims.

**Table 5: Influence of Marketing Channels and Advertisements on Consumer Perception of Snacks and Pasta Quality in Sokoto**

Question	Response Options	Responses
Where do you usually hear about new snacks and pasta products?	TV advertisements	92(31.0%)
	Radio	66(22.3%)
	Social media	211(71.3%)
	Word of mouth	49(16.5%)
	In store promotions	32(10.8%)
How likely are you to try a new snack or pasta based on advertisements?	Others	38(12.8%)
	Very likely	52(17.5%)
	Likely	77(26.1%)
	Neutral	69(23.3%)
	Unlikely	82(27.8%)
Do you believe that marketing influences your perception of the quality of snacks and pasta?	Very unlikely	16(5.4%)
	Yes	92(31.1%)
	No	196(66.2%)
	Not sure	08(2.7%)

## DISCUSSION

The demographic data from the survey reflects responses from a socioeconomically active and diverse population. A significant proportion of respondents were aged 18–45, a demographic known to dominate the consumption of convenience foods such as snacks and pasta. This aligns with findings from Kearney (2020), who emphasized the prevalence of younger and middle-aged adults in driving demand for quick, accessible meals. While male respondents constituted 59.8% of the sample, the female segment was moderately represented, ensuring a balanced gender distribution that enhances the generalize ability of insights. The predominance of students (41.9%) and middle-income earners (46.0% earning ₦20,000–₦50,000) suggests that these products appeal strongly to individuals seeking affordability and ease of consumption, consistent with global trends (Barreiro-Hurle *et al.*, 2021).

Consumption habits revealed a high frequency of purchases, with 54.7% of respondents buying snacks and pasta daily, underscoring their integral role in Sokoto daily diet. However, the discovery that 45% of

respondents were unaware of quality standards and regulations is concerning, particularly when juxtaposed with studies indicating that consumer education on food safety significantly impacts purchasing behavior (Smith *et al.*, 2019). Moreover, the finding that 55.4% of respondents never check nutritional labels underscores a prioritization of convenience and price over health-related considerations. These behaviors align with insights from Kantor and Lobb (2017), which highlighted the dominance of convenience over informed decision-making in emerging markets.

Perceptions of product quality among respondents were notably negative, with 55.1% rating the quality of snacks and pasta as poor. Additionally, 67.2% reported encountering substandard or expired products, raising serious concerns about quality control and regulatory enforcement in Sokoto. These findings suggest systemic issues within the local supply chain, consistent with observations in markets facing regulatory challenges (Goyal and Joshi, 2020). The emphasis on price and expiry dates as key quality determinants highlights the importance of transparency and trust in product labeling. Moreover, the 68.3% of respondents equating price with quality underscores the persistence of the price-quality inference, a well-documented cognitive bias in consumer psychology (Salau *et al.*, 2017; Rao *et al.*, 2021).

Preferences for specific snacks and pasta types showcased a strong inclination towards accessible and familiar products. Biscuits (88.1%), cakes (85.4%), and chips (81.4%) dominated the snack category, while noodles (93.9%) were the preferred pasta, followed by spaghetti (67.2%) and macaroni (52.7%). These preferences mirror regional and global trends where convenience and brand familiarity significantly influence food choices (Baker *et al.*, 2021). The inclination towards familiar products underscores the importance of consistent quality and availability in maintaining consumer trust.

Marketing channels were pivotal in influencing consumer awareness, with 71.3% of respondents identifying social media as their primary source of information. This aligns with global observations of digital marketing's growing influence, particularly among younger demographics (Tungate, 2020). Despite this, 66.2% of respondents expressed skepticism about marketing's impact on their perception of product quality. This dichotomy suggests that while advertisements may generate initial interest, consumers in Sokoto remain cautious, relying on personal experiences and tangible product attributes over promotional claims. This nuanced behavior underscores the importance of authenticity and consistency in building long-term consumer trust (Hsu *et al.*, 2022).

## CONCLUSION

This study sheds light on the intricate dynamics of consumer perceptions, preferences, and behaviors

regarding snacks and pasta in Sokoto. The findings underscore the central role these products play in daily diets, with frequent consumption driven by their convenience and affordability. However, the study highlights a critical gap in consumer awareness about quality standards and regulations, coupled with limited attention to product labels. These factors likely contribute to uninformed purchasing decisions, leaving consumers vulnerable to substandard or expired products. The perception of product quality among consumers is predominantly negative, shaped by experiences with poor-quality goods and a strong reliance on price, expiry dates, and taste as indicators of quality. The prevalent association between higher prices and better quality reflects a cognitive bias that underscores the need for more transparent product information and labeling. Preferences for popular snacks such as biscuits, cakes, and chips, and pasta types like noodles, highlight the importance of catering to familiar, accessible, and trusted options in the local market.

Marketing, particularly through social media, has emerged as a key channel for product promotion and consumer engagement. However, skepticism regarding the influence of advertisements on quality perceptions emphasizes the critical role of authentic branding and consistent product performance in building consumer trust. These findings suggest significant opportunities for stakeholders to improve consumer experiences through targeted interventions. To foster a more informed and satisfied consumer base, a multifaceted approach is required. Educational campaigns that enhance awareness of food quality standards and promote the importance of label reading can empower consumers to make better-informed choices. Strengthening regulatory frameworks and ensuring stricter enforcement of quality control measures can address systemic issues in the supply chain and enhance product standards. Manufacturers and retailers should also leverage the power of social media not only for marketing but also as a platform to educate and engage with consumers, fostering transparency and trust.

In conclusion, improving the snack and pasta market in Sokoto hinges on bridging the gap between consumer expectations and product realities. By prioritizing education, quality assurance, and transparent communication, it is possible to transform the market into one that consistently delivers safe, high-quality, and satisfying products, ultimately cultivating a more loyal and discerning consumer base.

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