

JKHIRLA.A.O

# JOURNAL OF SCIENCE, FOOD AND HOSPITALITY

VOL. 1 NO. 1 2009



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80-93



# WOMEN IN FAST FOOD INDUSTRY IN NIGERIA, PARTICIPATION, CHALLENGES AND FUTURE PROSPECTS. CASE STUDY: LAGOS METROPOLIS

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## ABSTRACT

The fast food company in Nigeria has come a long way. They came under various name and ideologies but basically provide refreshments in the form of confectionery, paste and cereals preparations etc in the society.

Women are known to constitute considerable percentage in the fast food industry in Nigeria. In view of their unique roles both at home and in the labor market especially fast food companies. This study is designed:

- To assess the level of women involvement in the fast food companies.
- Identify the problems encountered in the companies.
- Assess the effect of works on their homes and economics status.
- Assess the future prospects for women in the fast food industry.

Structured questionnaires were distributed, collected and analyzed based on local Government representation that is, a company was selected from each of the 27 Local Governments in Lagos metropolis. The study has been able to explore the various roles, challenges and prospects of woman working in the fast food industry. It has identified some measures for improvement in the contributions women to the fast food business in Nigeria.

## INTRODUCTION

Fast food is a sector in the hospitality industry which grew from the combination of popular catering and take away of specially prepared dishes.

Fast food system is highly influenced by American Countries, being brought about by the pace at which American live, very restless in nature and always seeking for changes and new ideas so that they can lead the world. Thus, the system gained prominence with American workers who could not afford the time to sit down and have an elaborate meal. Lilicrap, (1998).

The early operators of fast foods in America were immortalized by having dishes named after them, they include Burger king corporation, Karl junior, Eddie king burger, McDonald and other.

The fast food business was introduced to Nigeria in the early 1940's. It however gained prominence in the 70's when Nigeria economy became buoyant with expansion of many industries and tremendous boost to various commercial activities taken place in many cities in Nigeria. Eddie king international came in 1974 and

grew fast, other companies joined few years after; they include United Africa companies (UAC).M. They were producing 'gala' others were chicken George, Semi fast food, Carara and Express Fisheries. Many others appeared in the market but fizzled out due to poor management Akogbori (0999). Women are known to constitute a considerable percentage in fast food business in Nigeria. This confirmed Goodie's (1996) observation that "Long before factories were made women have always been involved in the labor market, gathering tea, planting seeds and harvesting". before the advent of fast food in Nigeria, ancient woman in Nigeria were actively engaged in producing our indigenous fast foods like bean cakes "akara" roasted yams, "ojojo" "moinmoin" etc. following this tradition, women have been known to dominate the food industry. Thus, it is not surprising that fast food business in Nigeria as observed by Adeyemi (2000) to have larger population of women than men.

The movement of women into Hospitality industry reflects the overall movement of women within the workforce about thirty years ago, women



entered the industry as part time workers, mainly as waitresses or cooks. For many, it was a way to earn money and remain at home during part of the day.

Slowly, women are entering the hospitality industry as professionals. The numbers of females from institutions were once low and negligible but now constitute 50% or more of the current enrolments in hospitality programmes in many college and universities as women enter the work force with more Education and motivation, their expectations and aspirations also increased. (Weinstein, 1997)

### SOME WOMAN PIONEERS: -

Mahala Stouffer introduced the use of standardized recipes, Departmentalization and human resource management into Stouffer restaurant chains in Cleveland, Ohio. Lunder (1989)

Alice Marriot was a cook and bookmaker for Marriot Corporation USA. Helen Corbit was a noted author, Lecturer and food writer, and newspaper columnist. She served as food service Director for Zodiac room of the Dallas department store from 1955 until her retirement in 1970. Others that played remarkable roles include Katherine Manchester who adapted centralized tray service and airline hot and cold cart system at Brook General Hospital F.T Sam Hawsten Texas.

Eleine Grossinger. Estes, Alice was considered a roles model for women chefs in America in the eighties until she retired. Messick (1992).

In Nigeria, some notable women in fast food include Kehinde Kamson of Sweet Sensation who specialized on cakes, pies, rice, and chicken dishes. She read accountancy at University of Lagos and became chartered at the Institution of Chartered Accountants of Nigeria. Another notable Lady in fast food is Abosede Ayeni. She started Tantalizer Company in 1997. She read Language Arts at Obafemi Awolowo University and worked with Lever Brothers now Unilever as Marketing Personnel till she left in 1991. Tantalizers too cater for her numerous clients with delicious confectionaries chicken and rice dishes.

In view of these obvious needs and the roles of women in the fast food industry, this study is designed to

- a) To assess the level of women involvement in the fast food industry.
- b) Identify the problems encountered
- c) Assess the effect of the work on their marital lives and economic status

- d) Assess the future prospects for women in the fast food industry.

### METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted within the 27 Local Governments in Lagos State. Three Local Government which has the highest, average and low population of fast foods companies were chosen. These were Lagos Island, Ikeja and Alimoso Local Governments. The concentration of fast food companies varies and with the population of customers. Lagos Island has highest numbers of fast foods, while Ikeja local Government is averagely populated and Alimoso is lowest being sparsely populated. In each of the three-selected L.G. there were at least 10 fast food sales companies out of which 6 were randomly picked after which 3 were again randomly picked. Giving us a total of 9 samples to work on from all the three selected Local Governments. They all comprise of big and small sized fast food companies, 300 stratified questionnaires were administered but 250 were received back.



**Table 1: DISTRIBUTION OF PARTICIPATION, PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS**

	Frequency	percentage
<b>Gender distribution in fast food companies</b>	98	39.2
Male		
<b>Educational Status of the women in the companies</b>	152	60.8
Female		
Low level Manpower	180	72
High level Manpower	70	28
<b>Major Areas of operation</b> (By women)		
Kitchen	150	60
Sales Marketing	160	64
Reception	175	75
<b>Staff welfare benefits</b> (For women)		
Adequate	80	32
Not adequate	110	44
Partially adequate	60	24
<b>Salary and allowances</b> (For women)		
Adequate	50	20
Not adequate	150	60
Partially adequate	50	20
<b>Staff Development Programmes</b> (For women)		
Constantly effected	90	36
Partially effected	80	32
Not effected	80	32
<b>Equal Opportunities for Men and Women</b>		
Yes	151	60.4
No	99	39.6
<b>Effect of working Hours on domestic Responsibilities</b> (on women)		
Positive	85	34
Negative	100	40
Non	65	26
<b>Effect of work on domestic, and Economic Status</b> (on women)		
Positive	230	92
Negative	20	8
<b>Educated and skilled Women appointed Top positions</b>		
Yes	100	40
No	150	60
<b>Problems encountered due to nature of work</b> (By women)		
Lack of Home support	120	48
Health hazards	100	40
Machinery	20	8
Danger on the streets	10	4

Source: Field survey, 2007 -02-13

### Results and Discussion

The result of the study showed that of 250 respondents interviewed, 60.8% percent were women while 39.2 were males. As for educational status 72 percent were of low-level manpower while 28 percent were in the cadre of high-level manpower. It was noticed in the study that women dominated the most sensitive parts of the companies. These are kitchen, 60% sales 64% and reception 75% this gave credence to Afsher (1991) observation that various cultural roles of women make them better managers. He noted that women have a natural way of approach to whatever they want

to do and this why they are able to combine different roles, occupational, material, domestic etc differently. The study showed that the work has given a tremendous leverage to their domestic and social status within their communities. Kahrl (1998) sees the business as one that is characterized with high income. This made it possible for the women to the family income and also be to meet other social expectation. Past researches has showed that every working women experiences some problems related to their kind of job much more than man. The problems most prominent to women in fast food in Nigeria are health hazards and lack of home support. These were 48 and



40 percent respectively. Akogbori (1999) attributed lack of home support from spouses who feel neglected most times due to long and odd hours their wives spent at work, hence they become indifferent or unsupportive in their wives work. The health hazards is due to the nature of the operation a fast food worker has to perform which are usually more than one specific tasks. A research carried out revealed that women who constantly work in the kitchen especially very close to the oven where there is much heat, experience abnormal stomach conditions (disorder). About 70% of the women used as subjects have suffered miscarriages at least once in three year. Hensahaw (1998).

The study revealed that about 40 percent of women in fast food companies are educated and holding higher management positions.

Gilew (1990) observed that women will continue to be actively involved in the operations of fast food at all levels that as long as the business continues to thrive.

This study is optimistic that given the unique nature of women for their ability to combine different role coupled with adequate economic empowerment, women may in the future dominate and become big time employers of labour in the fast food business in Nigeria.

### Conclusion and Recommendations

This study has been able to explore the various roles, challenges and prospects of women working in the fast food companies and has been able identify the following as measures for improvement in the roles of women in the fast food industry.

- (a) Improvement in access to health facilities
- (b) Establishment of marital counseling centres to assist women overcome problems arising due to nature of work.
- (c) Gender blind policies should be corrected to empower women to contribute more to fast food industry.
- (d) Women credit schemes should be established by the government specifically for women businesspersons to boost their capital base into self employment.
- (e) Development of appropriate technologies and machineries for

preparation, processing, preservation and storage of foods. This will ensure less stress at work and aid higher production and compliance with food safety standards.

- (f) Gender favored policies to encourage the education and development of women so as to be able to increase their participation in various relevant industries.

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