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ASSESSING CONSUMERS' PERCEPTION OF SHRINKFLATION IN NIGERIA AND ITS IMPLICATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Gbenusola Akinwale* and Victor Ojakorotu**

ABSTRACT

We live in a society where people pay more to get less for most of the consumables, this has had a major impact on household poverty in Nigeria in recent times where you have to pay more to still get a lower quantity of an item. The study assessed the perception of consumers towards shrinkflation in Nigeria. Two research questions guided the study, (a) to know if the concept of shrinkflation exists in Nigeria and (b) to know if age and job status will affect their perception of shrinkflation. The study selected N=330 adults from Lagos Central Senatorial District of Lagos state. The participants were all adults in schools, formal sector, and informal sectors in Lagos. The study used already standardized Shrinkflation Awareness Scale by Mbewu to explore the variables. The data collected was analyzed with SPSS v29, with descriptive and inferential statistics. The descriptive statistics showed that people are aware of the downsizing of consumables and a large number agreed that it is a deceptive business practice to cheat the consumers. The demographic variables were not significant thus implying that all ages and all the sectors are feeling the effects of shrinkflation. The study concluded that the effect of the inflation that is currently affecting Nigeria is affecting and increasing poverty level because the cost of items is increasing yet the quantity is also reducing. The study recommended that the government should ensure that regulatory agencies play their roles in supervising the activities of the manufacturers to promote the development of Nigeria.

Keywords: Consumer perception, Shrinkflation, Nigeria, Sustainable Development.

1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

As we are getting closer to 2030, the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 1 (no poverty), 2 (zero hunger), 3 (good health and well-being), 9 (industry, innovation and infrastructure, and 12 (responsible consumption and production) are distant aspirations in Nigeria

because of the direct implication of the economic hardship facing many people across the globe. The level of poverty in Nigeria is not just a household issue but has transcended several organisations. This has taken a different turn as we now see a covert strategy, known as shrinkflation which has now become increasingly prevalent in the marketplace, leaving consumers to grapple with the perception of diminished value despite paying the same amount¹. Such occurrences usually only come about during periods of prolonged economic depression or a form of meltdown in the value of commodities or an unforeseen devaluation of currency which results in an increase in cost. The term, shrinkflation, was first used by British economists, Domitrovic², the word exists as a portmanteau of the words “shrink” and “inflation” which come together to describe the process of reduction or shrinkage in the quantity or quality of goods and purchased items but a rather stable or even increased price of said commodities.

The pattern of deceptive business practices has a significant implication on the livelihood of the citizens as poverty and hunger has increased tremendously in the country. The prices of commodities have skyrocketed yet the consumers are not getting the same quantity for the amount being paid for the products. SDG goals that focused Industry, innovation and infrastructure (SDG 9) and responsible consumption and production (SDG 12), are all linked to shrinkflation in a way, the industries are no longer living to their expectations because of the downward economic situation of the country and this has made several young people to rely on irresponsible consumption of cheap but dangerous substances that have adverse effect on their physical and mental health.

The development of Nigeria is tied to several aspects of the SDGs which must be addressed in earnest so as to reduce the poverty and hunger level in the country. In economics, shrinkflation, or grocery shrink ray, or package downsizing, is a process characterized by the shrinkage in the size or

* Department of Political Studies & International Relations, North West University, Mafikeng, South Africa. Email: gakinwale@unilag.edu.ng

** Department of Political Studies & International Relations, North West University, Mafikeng, South Africa.

¹ Stanley Mbewu, 'Development and Validation of Shrinkflation Scale' (Bachelor of Science Dissertation, University of Lagos 2023).

² Brian Domitrovic, *Econoclasts: The Rebels Who Sparked the Supply-Side Revolution and Restored American Prosperity* (Bibliovault OAI Repository, The University of Chicago Press 2009)

quantity, and even sometimes, the quality of consumer products while their prices remain the same or even increase. Essentially, it is a form of hidden inflation where instead of increasing the price of a product which is usually immediately evident to its consumers, the producers and marketers rather reduce the size of the product while maintaining the same price. Real-life examples of these tactics can be observed in the reduction in size of its large bottle by Coca-Cola from 2 liters to 1.75 liters in 2014; or Toblerone's slashing of the weight of Toblerone bars from 200 grams to 170 grams in 2010³.

Ending poverty in all its forms everywhere, by 2030 is a far-off goal to several nations, to eradicate extreme poverty for all people everywhere, currently measured as people living on less than \$2.15 (#3,104.60k) a day. Reduction in at least by half the proportion of men, women, and children of all ages living in poverty in all its dimensions according to national definition. The goal is that by 2030, all men and women in particular the poor and the vulnerable will have equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to basic services, ownership and control over land and other forms of property, inheritance, natural resource, appropriate new technology and financial services including microfinance.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Bizzotto⁴ (2022), made mention of the suspicious practice considered to be certainly misleading for consumers due to the changing of the quantity of product sold while maintaining the same shape and size of packaging. Such deceptive marketing techniques are so widespread, and as a result, in Italy, the CODACONS (Coordination of associations for the protection of environment and the rights of users and consumers) have filed several complaints with the Antitrust Authority and 104 public prosecutor's offices with the aim of establishing whether the practice constitutes an offense such as fraud or unfair trading practice. It is imperative as a consumer's right to be adequately informed on the characteristics of the product they intend to

³ Charles W Gittins, 'What Does "Shrinkflation" Mean? Are Product Packages Getting Smaller Due to Inflation?' (Diario AS, 13 June 2022) https://en.as.com/latest_news/what-does-shrinkflation-mean-are-product-packages-getting-smaller-due-to-inflation-n/ accessed 25 August 2024

⁴ M Bizzotto, "'Shrinkflation' – A Deceptive Marketing Practice. Commission Protection for Consumers Against the Phenomenon of Product Downsizing" (European Parliament 2022) https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-9-2022-002635_EN.html accessed 25 August 2024

purchase according to the European Union regulations on the provision of food information to consumers. As such, the commission is required to give their position on the practice of shrinkflation, as well as how it plans to protect consumers against unfair practices such as this.

With the help of his comprehensive research about shrinkflation in the global economic environment, Wood, Bryan⁵ discovered the presence of an ethical dilemma for shrinkflation which may be observed as an ideal example of the stakeholder theory vs shareholder theory. For depth, both sides present excellent arguments to the effect where on one side of the dilemma, companies are trying to keep proceeds up during periods of inflation and economic stagnation, and on the other hand, consumers consider the practice to be dishonest and deceptive. This interaction, otherwise referred to as the organizational vs consumer perspectives, has been viewed in different lights in different locations with places like Japan among others outrightly refusing to adopt the practice of shrinkflation for the sake of doing the right thing. Ultimately, the study accounts for the dilemma that is the practice of shrinkflation of which, in a more positive light, when done correctly, coupled with proper business-consumer communication, can be considered a good business practice, but otherwise, is deceptive and stealthy in the eyes of the consumers.

Furthermore, Çakır, & Balagtas⁶, in their publication, identified the commonality in the reduction of the volumes of product per package among producers of packaged goods. The tactic is commonly referred to as package downsizing. The extent to which consumers develop different sensitivities to package downsizing were investigated, and this was done by the estimation of a random utility model of demand. Its goal was to measure the responses of consumers to the package size and the prices using household scanned panel data on bulk ice cream purchases in Chicago. In detail, the framework of their study involves the modeling of household heterogeneity, addressing price endogeneity and accounting for unbalanced choice alternatives (Çakır, & Balagtas⁷. Aided by their study, they discovered that consumers are usually less responsive to package size as opposed to the price of the parcel itself.

⁵ Brian Wood, 'Shrinkflation: Ethical Dilemma, Deception, or Good Business?' (2022) International Business and Trade, University of Charleston

⁶ Metin Çakır and Joseph Balagtas, 'Consumer Response to Package Downsizing: Evidence from the Chicago Ice Cream Market' (2013) 90 Journal of Retailing DOI: 10.1016/j.jretai.2013.06.002

⁷ Ibid

Their results implied that managers and marketers can effectively use downsizing as a hidden method of price increase in order to mitigate problems of production costs from raw materials and maximize their profits.

However, despite the number of reviewed publications alluding to the effects of shrinkflation on consumers and consumer behavior, little to no studies exist on how these reactions might be related to personality. Renowned theories which include the psychodynamic theory, traits theory, behavioral, humanistic and socio-cognitive theories were all analyzed in context of their development and limitations. As such, their publication called to question the relevance of these theories in understanding consumer buying behaviors and therefore went on to analyze and examine published empirical studies that possess established links between personality and consumer behaviour as well as those who did not.

2.1 Statement of Problem

Shrinkflation has a negative implication on consumers purchasing habit and it is really affecting several people in Nigeria, it is fast becoming a normal practice among producers, the number of products that undergo some form of downsizing increases every quarter, most especially as a result of the ever-decreasing standard of living and loss of value of currency in Nigeria. More and more large producers in the world markets and Nigeria now rely on this strategy to maintain their competitive prices without significantly hurting their profits or consumer's sentiments. However, shrinkflation has now become the order as most companies are struggling to make profit and at the same time manage the consumers, so as to prevent outbursts of frustrations from the public.

It is now becoming clearer to the public as sentiments towards brands begin to "come to light" on what's going on. The consumers encounter these changes and react in certain ways to them but many do not have the appropriate government agency to report these issues in products reduction to. In the context of consumer psychology, the perspectives of consumer emotions, personality and attitudes are called to question as these internal aspects of consumers cause them to make possibly drastic decisions with respect to shrinkflation. Hence, these consumer emotions that come about as a result of actions of producers create a cause-and-effect interaction which is considered important enough for study from a psychological standpoint.

A study on current issues and trends posted by Riley⁸ described consumers as currently hyperconscious around the topic of inflation due to vast amounts of information in circulation and by extension; it translates to an added vigilance about shrinkflation as cited by Emily Moquin (2022), a food and beverage analyst at a data intelligence firm. ‘No one likes to pay more for less’ and indeed, the concept of shrinkflation is affecting buying habits⁹.

The global effort for the SDGs calls for prioritizing reduction of hunger and poverty across all ages, understanding the indivisible nature of the goals, and seeking synergies across sectors will help Nigeria combat the longstanding economic setback of economic inflation and by extension shrinkflation which has direct implications on all and sundry. Consequently, it is important to assess the consumers’ perception of shrinkflation in Nigeria. This study will add to the frontier of discussion on the concept of shrinkflation and how to mitigate effort at reducing this business trend that has further added to the present economic hardship of Nigerians.

2.2 Objectives of the Study

The main aim of this study is to assess the Consumers Perception of shrinkflation in Nigeria and its implications on poverty and hunger reduction.

The specific objectives of this study are to:

- a) Assess the Consumers Perception of shrinkflation in Nigeria
- b) Establish the role of demographic factors such as age and job status on the perception of shrinkflation.

3. RESEARCH METHOD

The research was conducted in the Lagos central senatorial districts of Lagos. It involved the participation of the adults in formal and informal sectors. Additionally, the high prevalence of product purchasing behaviour people within the metropolis because we have a huge number of people in both

⁸ Chole Riley, ‘Shrinkflation: How It’s Affecting Shopper Buying Habits’ (Supermarket News 2022) <https://www.supermarketnews.com/issues-trends/shrinkflation-how-its-affecting-shopper-buying-habits> accessed 25 August 2024

⁹ Emily Moquin, ‘Consumers’ Sensitivity to “Shrinkflation” Is Leading Them to Switch Food & Beverage Brands’ (Morning Consult 2022) <https://morningconsult.com/2022/08/29/consumer-sensitivity-to-shrinkflation/> accessed 25 August 2024

sectors of the economy and it is important to explore their perception of shrinkflation as well as their reactions to their awareness of shrinkflation of their most cherished products. It maintains a large portfolio of marketers with target audiences ranging from the impulse and expensive buyers to everyday products for the common people, as such, the research setting presents a rare opportunity to gain insights into the factors that influence how people react to changing economic situations and its effect on their favourite and much needed products.

A total of 330 participants were conveniently selected to participate in the study, a survey design method was considered appropriate for the study.

3.1 Shrinkflation Awareness and Perception Scale

The Shrinkflation Awareness and Perception Scale is a 25-item self-report inventory developed by Mbewu to assess individuals' awareness of shrinkflation as well as the extent to which they perceive themselves to have been affected by it¹⁰. Given the impact of shrinkflation on consumers' wallets, it is important to measure their awareness and perception of this phenomenon. However, due to the apparent lack of an existing standardized scale for the measurement of the awareness and perception of shrinkflation, a new measurement scale was developed. The researcher got a Cronbach Alpha of 0.87.

3.2 Data Analysis

Upon collection of data through the structured questionnaire, and in analyzing the data collected for the purpose of carrying out this research, descriptive and inferential statistics were used. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) V29 program was used in the computing and quantitative analysis of data collected in this study.

Table 1: Data Presentation on Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Socio-Demographic variables	F (%)
Gender	
Male	146 (44.2)
Female	184 (55.8)

¹⁰ Ibid 1

Age

18 - 25 years	79 (23.9)
26 - 40 years	227 (68.8)
41 years and above	24 (7.3)

Educational Status

Educated	235 (71.2)
Uneducated	95 (28.8)

Employment Status

Student	44 (13.3)
Formal Sector	191 (57.9)
Informal Sector	95 (28.8)

Source: Researcher 2024

From the above table showing the socio demographic characteristics of participants that were used for the study. Gender of participants we had participants who are Male 146 (44.2%), and Female 184 (55.8%), Age of participants we had participants who falls between 18-25 years 79 (23.9%), 26-40 years 227 (68.8%), and 41 years and above 24 (7.3%), Educational status of participants revealed that 235 (71.2%), are educated and Uneducated 95 (28.8%), Employment Status revealed that 44 (13.3%) are students, with 191 (57.9%) in formal sector and informal sector 95 (28.8%).

3.21 Analysis of Research Questions**Table 2: Is shrinkflation real?**

Q1	Strongly Agree	219 (66.4%)
	Agree	94 (28.5%)
	Neither Agree nor Disagree	6 (1.8%)
	Disagree	7 (2.1%)
	Strongly Disagree	4 (1.2%)

Source: fieldwork 2024

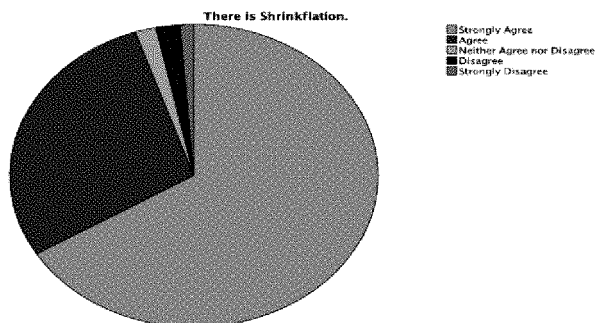


Table 2 above shows that 219(66.4%) of the respondents “Strongly Agree” that there’s shrinkflation also, 94(28.5%) of the respondents “Agree” that there’s shrinkflation while, 6(1.8%) of the respondents “Neither Agree nor Disagree” that there’s shrinkflation, 7(2.1%) of the respondents “Disagree” that there’s shrinkflation lastly, 4(1.2%) of the respondents “Strongly Disagree” that there’s shrinkflation.

Table 3: I noticed that the sizes and quality of products have decreased in recent times.

Q2	Strongly Agree	180 (54.5%)
	Agree	121 (36.7%)
	Neither Agree nor Disagree	19 (5.8%)
	Disagree	4 (1.2%)
	Strongly Disagree	6 (1.8%)

Source: fieldwork 2024

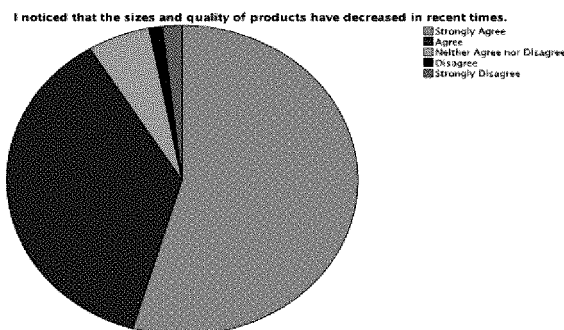


Table 3 above shows that 180(54.5%) of the respondents “Strongly Agree” that they noticed that the size and quality of product have decreased in recent times also, 121(36.7%) of the respondents “Agree” that they noticed that the size and quality of product have decreased in recent times while, 19(5.8%) of the respondents “Neither Agree nor Disagree” that they noticed that the size and quality of product have decreased in recent times, 4(1.2%) of the respondents “Disagree” that they noticed that the size and quality of product have decreased in recent times lastly, 6(1.8%) of the respondents “Strongly Disagree” that they noticed that the size and quality of product have decreased in recent times.

Table 4: Prices of Items have increased in recent times.

Q3	Strongly Agree	189 (57.3%)
	Agree	115 (34.8%)
	Neither Agree nor Disagree	18 (5.5%)
	Disagree	6 (1.8%)
	Strongly Disagree	2 (.6%)

Source: fieldwork 2024

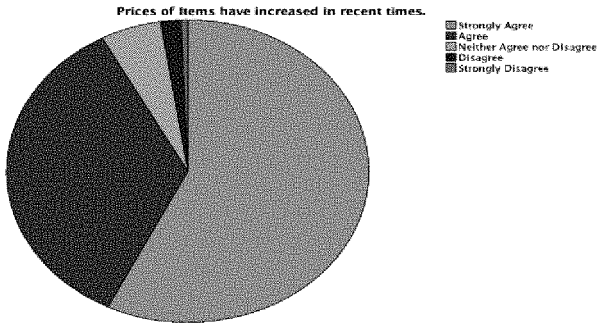


Table 4 above shows that 189(57.3%) of the respondents “Strongly Agree” that they noticed that the price of items have increased in recent times also, 115(34.8%) of the respondents “Agree” that they noticed that the price of items have increased in recent times while, 18(5.5%) of the respondents “Neither Agree nor Disagree” that they noticed that the price of items have increased in recent times, 6(1.8%) of the respondents “Disagree” that they noticed that the price of items have increased in recent times lastly, 2(.6%) of the respondents “Strongly Disagree” that they noticed that the price of items have increased in recent times.

Table 5: Some Items have been reduced numerically

Q4	Strongly Agree	164 (49.7%)
	Agree	121 (36.7%)
	Neither Agree nor Disagree	34 (10.3%)
	Disagree	6 (1.8%)
	Strongly Disagree	5 (1.5%)

Source: fieldwork 2024

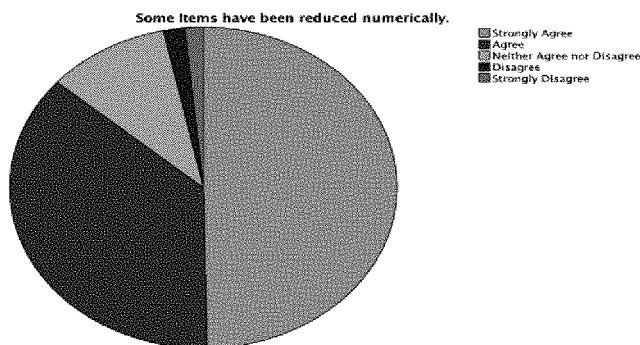


Table 5 above shows that 164(49.7%) of the respondents “Strongly Agree” that some items have been reduced numerically also, 121(36.7%) of the respondents “Agree” that some items have been reduced numerically while, 34(10.3%) of the respondents “Neither Agree nor Disagree” that some items have been reduced numerically, 6(1.8%) of the respondents “Disagree” that some items have been reduced numerically lastly, 5(1.5%) of the respondents “Strongly Disagree” that some items have been reduced numerically.

Table 6: I no longer get the same value for the products I purchase regularly.

Q5	Strongly Agree	169 (51.2%)
	Agree	114 (34.5%)
	Neither Agree nor Disagree	40 (12.1%)
	Disagree	6 (1.8%)
	Strongly Disagree	1 (.3%)

Source: fieldwork 2024

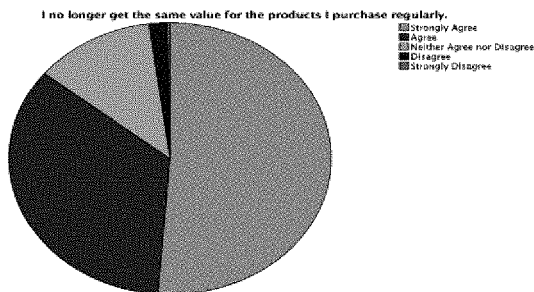


Table 6 above shows that 169(51.2%) of the respondents “Strongly Agree” that they no longer get the same value for the product they purchase regularly also, 114(34.5%) of the respondents “Agree” that they no longer get the same value for the product they purchase regularly while, 40(12.1%) of the respondents “Neither Agree nor Disagree” that they no longer get the same value for the product they purchase regularly, 6(1.8%) of the respondents “Disagree” that they no longer get the same value for the product they purchase regularly lastly, 1(.3%) of the respondents “Strongly Disagree” that they no longer get the same value for the product they purchase regularly.

Table 7: I think I am affected by the current trend of shrinkflation in Nigeria.

Q6	Strongly Agree	147 (44.5%)
	Agree	130 (39.4%)
	Neither Agree nor Disagree	43 (13.0%)
	Disagree	9 (2.7%)
	Strongly Disagree	1 (.3%)

Source: fieldwork 2024

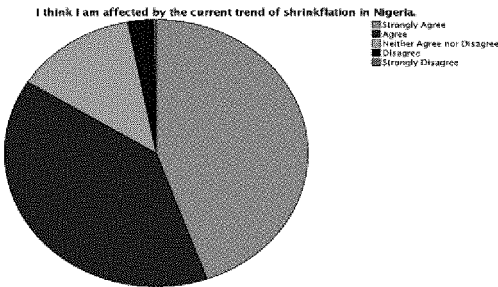


Table 7 above shows that 147(44.5%) of the respondents “Strongly Agree” that they are been affected by the current trend of shrinkflation in Nigeria also, 130(39.4%) of the respondents “Agree” that they are been affected by the current trend of shrinkflation in Nigeria while, 43(13.0%) of the respondents “Neither Agree nor Disagree” that they are been affected by the current trend of shrinkflation in Nigeria, 9(2.7%) of the respondents “Disagree” that they are been affected by the current trend of shrinkflation in Nigeria lastly, 1(3%) of the respondents “Strongly Disagree” that they are been affected by the current trend of shrinkflation in Nigeria.

Table 8: I think the existing trend is the same globally

Q7	Strongly Agree	79 (23.9%)
	Agree	119 (36.1%)
	Neither Agree nor Disagree	96 (29.1%)
	Disagree	26 (7.9%)
	Strongly Disagree	10 (3.0%)

Source: fieldwork 2024

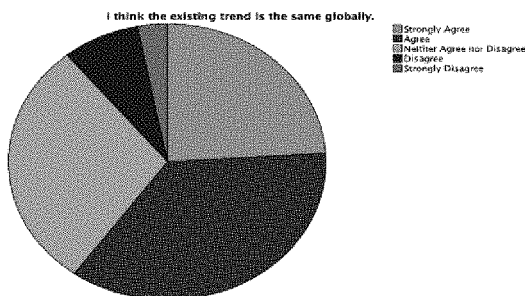


Table 8 above shows that 79(23.9%) of the respondents “Strongly Agree” that they think the existing trends is the same globally also, 119(36.1%) of the respondents “Agree” that they think the existing trends is the same globally while, 96(29.1%) of the respondents “Neither Agree nor Disagree” that they think the existing trends is the same globally, 26(7.9%) of the respondents “Disagree” that they think the existing trends is the same globally lastly, 10(3.0%) of the respondents “Strongly Disagree” that they think the existing trends is the same globally.

Table 9: I feel cheated when I buy low quality products for higher prices

Q8	Strongly Agree	136 (41.2%)
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Agree	122 (37.0%)
Neither Agree nor Disagree	48 (14.5%)
Disagree	20 (6.1%)
Strongly Disagree	4 (1.2%)

Source: fieldwork 2024

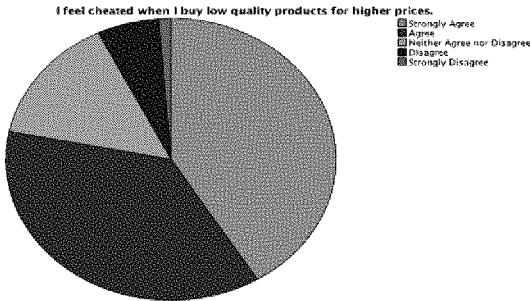


Table 9 above shows that 136(41.2%) of the respondents “Strongly Agree” that feel cheated when they buy low quality product for higher prices also, 122(37.0%) of the respondents “Agree” that feel cheated when they buy low quality product for higher prices while, 48(14.5%) of the respondents “Neither Agree nor Disagree” that feel cheated when they buy low quality product for higher prices, 20(6.1%) of the respondents “Disagree” that feel cheated when they buy low quality product for higher prices lastly, 4(1.2%) of the respondents “Strongly Disagree” that feel cheated when they buy low quality product for higher prices.

Table 10: I feel that shrinkflation is a deceptive business practice

Q9	Strongly Agree	102 (30.9%)
	Agree	125 (37.9%)
	Neither Agree nor Disagree	71 (21.5%)
	Disagree	23 (7.0%)
	Strongly Disagree	8 (2.4%)

Source: fieldwork 2024

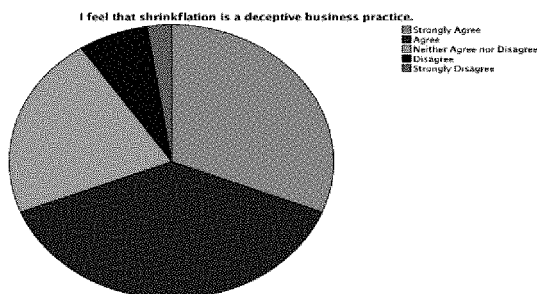


Table 10 above shows that 102(30.9%) of the respondents “Strongly Agree” that they feel that shrinkflation is a deceptive business practice also, 125(37.9%) of the respondents “Agree” that they feel that shrinkflation is a deceptive business practice while, 71(21.5%) of the respondents “Neither Agree nor Disagree” that they feel that shrinkflation is a deceptive business practice, 23(7.0%) of the respondents “Disagree” that they feel that shrinkflation is a deceptive business practice lastly, 8(2.4%) of the respondents “Strongly Disagree” that they feel that shrinkflation is a deceptive business practice.

Table 11: I sometimes change brands I purchase from because of shrinkflation

Q10	Strongly Agree	122 (37.0%)
	Agree	112 (33.9%)
	Neither Agree nor Disagree	68 (20.6%)
	Disagree	22 (6.7%)
	Strongly Disagree	6 (1.8%)

Source: fieldwork 2024

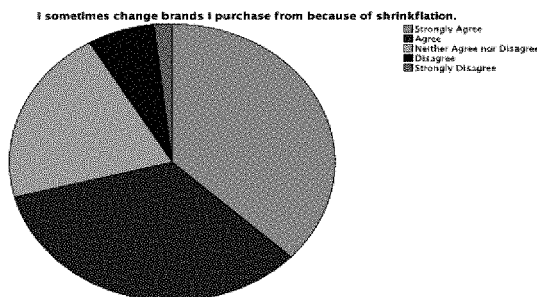


Table 11 above shows that 122(37.0%) of the respondents “Strongly Agree” that they sometimes change brands they purchase from because of shrinkflation also, 112(33.9%) of the respondents “Agree” that they sometimes change brands they purchase from because of shrinkflation while, 68(20.6%) of the respondents “Neither Agree nor Disagree” that they sometimes change brands they purchase from because of shrinkflation, 22(6.7%) of the respondents “Disagree” that they sometimes change brands they purchase from because of shrinkflation lastly, 6(1.8%) of the respondents “Strongly Disagree” that they sometimes change brands they purchase from because of shrinkflation.

Table 12: I noticed changes in quality of products that have undergone shrinkflation

Q11	Strongly Agree	127 (38.5%)
	Agree	113 (34.2%)
	Neither Agree nor Disagree	64 (19.4%)
	Disagree	20 (6.1%)
	Strongly Disagree	6 (1.8%)

Source: fieldwork 2024

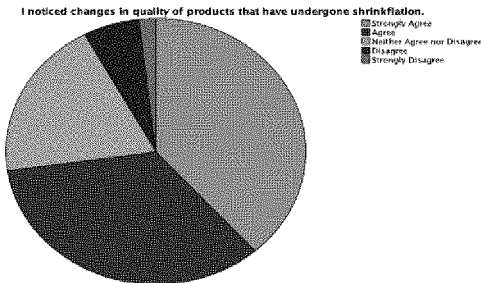


Table 12 above shows that 127(38.5%) of the respondents “Strongly Agree” that they noticed changes in quality of products that have undergone shrinkflation also, 113(34.2%) of the respondents “Agree” that they noticed changes in quality of products that have undergone shrinkflation while, 64(19.4%) of the respondents “Neither Agree nor Disagree” that they noticed changes in quality of products that have undergone shrinkflation, 20(6.1%) of the respondents “Disagree” that they noticed changes in quality of products that have undergone shrinkflation lastly, 6(1.8%) of the respondents “Strongly Disagree” that they noticed changes in quality of products that have undergone shrinkflation.

Table 13: I doubt I would keep purchasing products that have undergone shrinkflation

Q12	Strongly Agree	71 (21.5%)
	Agree	124 (37.6%)
	Neither Agree nor Disagree	101 (30.6%)
	Disagree	30 (9.1%)
	Strongly Disagree	4 (1.2%)

Source: fieldwork 2024

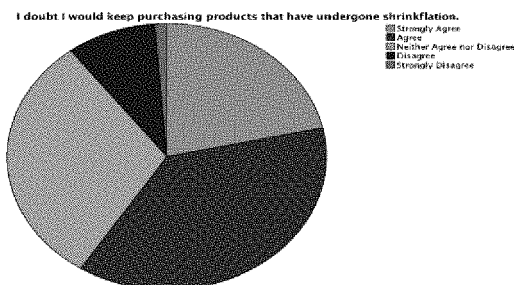


Table 13 above shows that 71(21.5%) of the respondents “Strongly Agree” that they doubt, they would keep purchasing products that have undergone shrinkflation also, 124(37.6%) of the respondents “Agree” that they doubt, they would keep purchasing products that have undergone shrinkflation while, 101(30.6%) of the respondents “Neither Agree nor Disagree” that they doubt, they would keep purchasing products that have undergone shrinkflation, 30(9.1%) of the respondents “Disagree” that they doubt, they would keep purchasing products that have undergone shrinkflation lastly, 4(1.2%) of the respondents “Strongly Disagree” that they doubt, they would keep purchasing products that have undergone shrinkflation.

Table 14: I think companies should be held accountable for engaging in shrinkflation

Q13	Strongly Agree	114 (34.5%)
	Agree	84 (25.5%)
	Neither Agree nor Disagree	79 (23.9%)
	Disagree	44 (13.3%)
	Strongly Disagree	9 (2.7%)

Source: fieldwork 2024

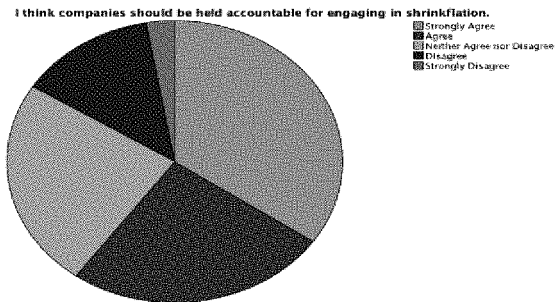


Table 14 above shows that 114(34.5%) of the respondents “Strongly Agree” that they think companies should be held accountable for engaging in shrinkflation also, 84(25.5%) of the respondents “Agree” that they think companies should be held accountable for engaging in shrinkflation while, 79(23.9%) of the respondents “Neither Agree nor Disagree” that they think companies should be held accountable for engaging in shrinkflation, 44(13.3%) of the respondents “Disagree” that they think companies should be held accountable for engaging in shrinkflation lastly, 9(2.7%) of the respondents “Strongly Disagree” that they think companies should be held accountable for engaging in shrinkflation.

Table 15: t-test independent showing gender differences on shrinkflation

	N	Mean	SD	df	t	p-value
Male	145	25.73	7.18			
				327	-.796	>.05
Female	184	23.57	6.81			

Not Significant at .05

An independent t-test was conducted to examine gender differences on Shrinkflation. However, no significant difference was revealed ($P=0.828$) in the scores for Male ($M=25.73$, $S.D= 7.18$) and In the score for Females ($M= 23.56$, $S.D=6.81$) with male scoring higher than female on the perception of shrinkflation.

Table 16: t-test independent showing educational level differences on shrinkflation

	N	Mean	SD	df	t	p-value
Educated	235	24.63	7.07	327	.447	>.05
Uneducated	94	24.24	7.01			

Not Significant at .05

An independent t-test was conducted to examine differences in educational level on Shrinkflation. However, no significant difference was revealed ($P=0.675$) in the scores for Educated ($M=24.63$, $S.D.=7.07$) and In the score for Uneducated ($M=24.24$, $S.D.=7.01$) with educated participants scoring higher than uneducated participants on the perception of shrinkflation.

Table 17: One way ANOVA results of Age differences on shrinkflation.

Shrinkflation	N	Mean	SD	Df	F-Ratio	Pv
18 - 25 years	79	24.72	7.41	2	.175	.840
26 - 40 years	226	24.53	6.95	326		
41 years and above	24	23.75	6.96			

$P>.05$

Note: The result above shows age differences on shrinkflation. However, no significant difference was revealed $F(2,326) = .175$, $P>.05$. Furthermore, it was revealed that participants within the age group 18 - 25 years experienced the highest level of shrinkflation ($M = 24.72$), followed by participants within the age range 26-40 Years ($M = 24.53$) while participants within the age range 41 years and above experienced the lowest level of shrinkflation ($M = 23.75$).

Table 18: One way ANOVA results of employment status on shrinkflation

Shrinkflation	N	Mean	SD	Df	F-Ratio	Pv
Student	43	26.56	8.75	2	2.097	.124
Formal Sector	191	24.26	7.10	326		
Informal Sector	95	24.12	5.91			

$P<.05$

Note: The result above shows employment status on shrinkflation. However, no significant difference was revealed $F(2,326) = 2.097, P > .05$. Furthermore, it was revealed that participants who are students experienced the highest level of shrinkflation ($M = 26.56$), followed by participants who work in the formal sector ($M = 24.26$) while participants who work in the informal sector experienced the lowest level of shrinkflation ($M = 24.12$).

4. DISCUSSION

This objective spelt out the fundamental question of whether or not people are aware of the trend of shrinkflation in recent times in Nigeria. As expected, the participants are aware of the concept of shrinkflation, the findings thus revealed that people are aware that prices of commodities are high in recent times, not only that they are high but the quantity has also reduced. Some stated that they think the trends are the same globally. It was also revealed by the participants that the quality also reduced, majority of the respondent stated that they would stop buying products that are undergoing shrinkflation. People stated that they feel cheated especially when the size and numerical counts are reduces. A significant number agreed that it is a deceptive business practices and the affected companies should be sanctioned. The results revealed that people are aware of the activities of companies even though they did not have the right name to call the concept. Shrinkflation is a depressing activity in Nigeria as it has continued to reduce people's purchasing power. No meaning and sustainable development can happen in a society when citizens are paying too much just to get little quantity, the practice will continue to increase hunger and poverty in Nigeria. The SDG goal that aimed to end hunger by 2030 seems to be far from several households in Nigeria amidst the present economic hardship.

The second objective focused on the role of demographic variables in the understanding and awareness of the concept of shrinkflation. As expected, no significant difference was observed statistically, which simply implies that shrinkflation affects everyone irrespective of age, the emerging adults which is the student's population has an high mean with those that are in their adulthood stage. Adulthood comes with responsibilities of caring for the younger children, this could be a possible reason while those age group pay more attention to the size of commodities than those that are not in their mid-adulthood stage, it is not surprising that students especially young people are paying attention to why items are reducing in sizes. One explanation that could be responsible for this is that the students are not working and majority of them depends on pocket money or stipends from

their parents to survive in school, so they pay attention to sizes as quantity really matter to younger people. The results further revealed that those in the formal sectors of the economy pay attention to shrinkflation and more aware than those in the informal sector. Education, knowledge and vigilance sometimes help people to understand issues going on in their environment, the people in informal setting are the least affected, not because they do not purchase items but they rather purchase without necessarily paying attention to the downsizing of the product. It is noteworthy to state that shrinkflation is now very common in Nigeria and it has affected not only supermarkets but open market trays and measuring cans are equally affected.

The long term implication of shrinkflation is quite enormous as more people will continue to live in poverty and hunger will continue to ravage the society. It is also important to state that citizens are losing confidence in the government because they ought to come to the aids of people in reducing the effects of inflation, rather the citizens are paying for everything.

5. RECOMMENDATION AND CONCLUSION

The study strongly recommends the need for government regulatory agencies to be proactive and should ensure that citizens are served rightly not only in public offices but people get value for whatever they purchase irrespective of the prices. The companies must understand that this is a deceptive business strategy that will continue to mitigate against the sustainable development agenda of the country because it adds to the current hardship the citizens are facing.

There is need for the Standard Organization of Nigeria and other regulatory agencies to challenge this menace that is fast eating deep into most of the products available in open markets and supermarket to pay adequate attention and ensure that the description on the packaging is exactly what the consumers are getting.

The agencies should not only check quality but also quantity of products in Nigeria. It is also important for scholars to do thorough research on this subject matter, we only have few newspaper columns on it but the position of scientific research will make this issue become a policy driven problem that government and all the important agencies will have a sustainable way to managing. The study recommends that manufacturers should understand that shrinkflation is a deceptive business practices with the sole aim of cheating unsuspecting consumers.

The study concludes that shrinkflation, though a new concept but very common in Nigeria, the study thus revealed that shrinkflation is affecting several products in Nigeria, as little as sachet water is, it has downsized to the extent that the quantity has reduced from 50cl to 35cl in some companies, this is increasing the economic hardship in Nigeria. The desired sustainable development may not happen especially in a society where there are no values for consumers and where people spend beyond what they need to spend on consumables because of inflation and by extension shrinkflation, then poverty and hunger will increase. Sustainable development cannot be achieved in a society where the citizens are experiencing poverty as a result of inflation and by extension feeling it more because of shrinkflation created by the manufactural.