

Article

Ethics and Sustainability in Nsukka Cashew: A Historical and Future-Oriented Appraisal (2000–2024)

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Abstract

Nsukka cashew is globally recognized, yet unethical business practices within its value chain threaten market value, sustainability, and reputation. This study provides a holistic appraisal of where such practices occur in the Nsukka cashew sector (2000–2024) and their prospective consequences for industry growth. Employing a convergent mixed-methods design anchored in the concept of future self-continuity, the research integrates historical analysis with qualitative insights from key stakeholders across the cashew value chain. Findings indicate that unethical practices are perpetrated by both men and women driven by short-term gains and low future self-continuity. The study identifies specific hotspots along the value chain—production, processing, pricing, contract enforcement, and export documentation—and links these practices to adverse outcomes for market access, consumer trust, and long-term sustainability. The results underscore the need for institutional oversight and accountability mechanisms. Accordingly, the paper recommends the establishment of a regulatory body for cashew products to standardize practices, enhance traceability, and safeguard the industry's future viability.

Keywords: *Cashew business, unethical practices, future self-continuity, Nsukka region*

Introduction

In Nigeria and Nsukka in particular, unethical business practices are seen in many businesses, in a bid to acquire more and unlimited wealth among businessmen and women. The cashew industry is not exempt from these unwholesome practices. According to Bello and Aliyu (2018), the Nigerian society is characterized by many unethical business environments. Nigeria has lost several billion naira through these unethical business practices in the various sectors of the nation's economy. Unethical business practices are the kind of practices that are deceptive, exploitative, and dangerous to human life. They are those actions that do not conform to the acceptable standard of business. The various social criticisms of marketing can be classified into those alleged to hurt individual consumers, society as a whole, and other business firms. They went on to say that there are many instances where businessmen and women act within the law, but their actions hurt society and are generally considered to be unethical. To them, there are many ways businessmen and women engage in unethical conduct, exploiting their workers, their customers, and even the public at large. In some cases, it may be an individual within a business who is unethical in the course of his/her job, and sometimes, a corporate entity, where the whole business is corrupt from the top down, with disastrous results for society. Unethical business practices can destroy a business's reputation and possibly lead to legal troubles (Ayuba & Aliyu, 2018).

In view of the above, it is obvious that these unethical business practices are found in many business establishments in Nigeria, and these ugly and unwholesome attitudes of some businessmen and women have featured in the cashew industry in Nigeria and Nsukka in particular. These unethical business practices in the cashew industry were seen in various areas in the cashew industry in a bid to outsmart unsuspecting consumers or customers and other business associates without consideration of the long-term consequences on the industry.

However, in a view to do justice to this study, a concept was adopted to have a holistic navigation of the topic under discourse.

The Concept of Future Self-Continuity

The future self-continuity theory states that the decisions that individuals make are associated with the extent to which they perceive their present selves as connected to their future selves (Iheanacho, 2021). This indicates that decisions are made by people in various sectors of the economy in relation to present selves and future selves. These decisions might be in the business world, academic world, as well as other sectors of human endeavours. A person with a high future self-continuity tends to make decisions that would be ethical in nature, thereby promoting continuity in the industry, while a person with a low future self-continuity tends to make decisions that are unethical in nature, which inhibit the growth of the industry, for an instant or immediate benefit.

Iheanacho (2021) cited Hershfield, where he argues that this influence follows a mechanism that assigns to an individual whose present self and future self share connectedness a high likelihood of acting in ways that will benefit both him/her and society in the future. Conversely, the perception of the future self as a stranger lessens or reduces the motivation to act in ways that would benefit the future self or society. Therefore, the lack of continuity in the future self leads to unethical choices.

In view of this concept, some stakeholders in the cashew industry in the Nsukka region with low future self-continuity are seen taking decisions without the consideration of the future selves. These decisions are taken for an instant benefit without taking cognizance of the long-term implications on the future continuity of their industry. This concept of future self-continuity vividly captures the economic sabotage in this industry, as it helped in the interrogation and appraisal of the various areas of this cashew industry, where these unethical business practices are seen, and their implications on the industry

Study Context and Methods

The study covers the area known as the Nsukka Division of the colonial era, formerly made up of four county councils, namely Igbo-Etiti, Igbo-Eze, Isi-Uzo, and Uzo-Uwani. Currently, the Nsukka region has been further split into seven Local Government Areas. They are Igbo-Etiti, Igbo-Eze North, Igbo-Eze South, Nsukka, Isi-Uzo, Uzo-Uwani, and Udeniu. The region occupies the northern tip of Igboland, which ethnographers have traditionally described as the Elugwu (Enugu) sub-cultural group of the Northern Igbo (Afigbo, 1981). Below is the map of the Nsukka

Region or the Nsukka cultural zone showing areas of massive cashew plantations and business activities.

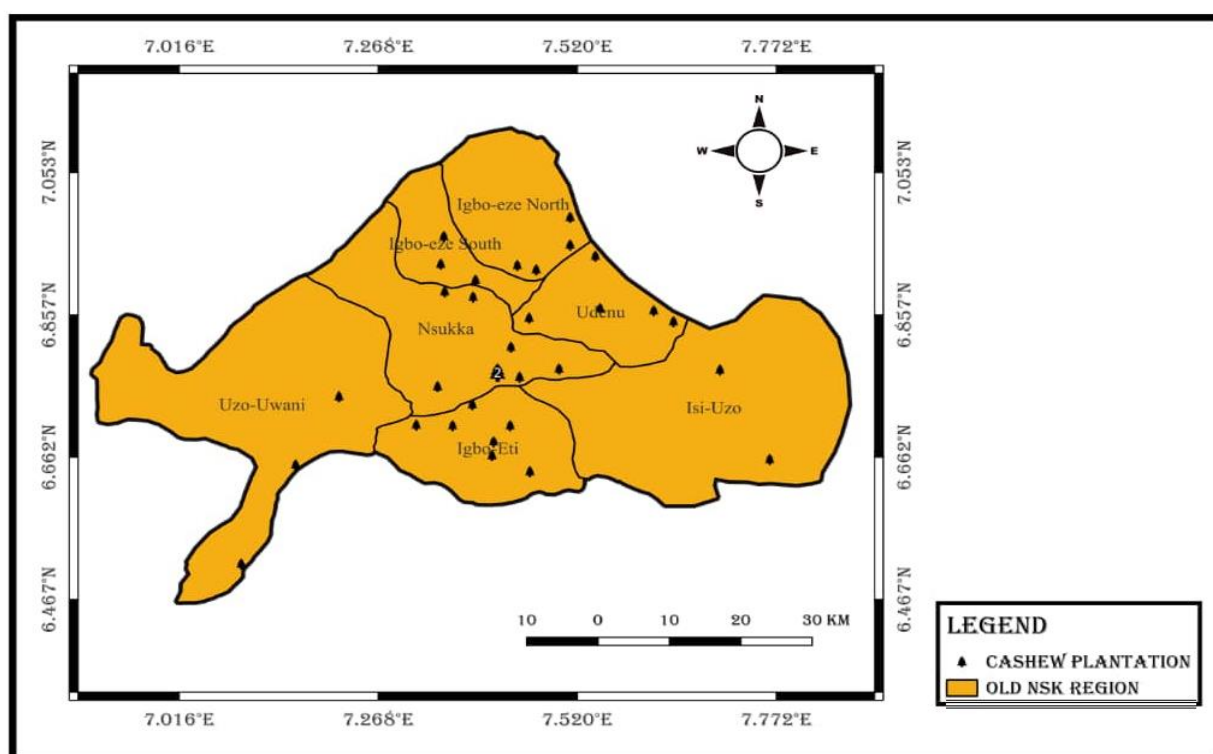


Fig. 1: Map showing the Nsukka Region or Nsukka cultural zone, showing areas of massive cashew plantations and businesses.

Source: Department of Geography, University of Nigeria, Nsukka

It is also referred to as the Old Nsukka Division, Nsukka Cultural Zone, Igbo Nsukka, Northern Igbo, and Enugu North Senatorial Zone. The above names refer to the same area of the study called the Nsukka region in this study, located in Enugu State, Southeastern Nigeria. This region holds a strategic position in the South-Eastern region, serving as a meeting point for traders from the North and South-Eastern Nigeria. The soil and climate of this region support cashew production, and this accounts for the widespread presence of cashew trees in the area. However, cashew plantations are predominantly found in Igbo-Etiti, Igbo-Eze South, Nsukka, Uzo-Uwani, and Udenu, with scanty of them found in Isi-Uzo and Igbo-Eze North areas of the region. The region has a total population of 1,378,408 with an area of 4,593 square kilometers, as released by the National Population Commission in 2006 (NPC, 2006).

The study adopted a mixed-methods approach of historical research design, combining qualitative and quantitative methods to gather comprehensive information on the research. Qualitative method includes in-depth interviews conducted across the seven Local Government Areas of the region with 105 knowledgeable key informants, participant observations, books, journals, online sources, and the quantitative method included the statistical data gathered in the course of the fieldwork, which were presented in tabular form and bar chart. Out of the 105 key informants interviewed, 5 of them in Udenu, 2 in Nsukka, 3 in Igbo-Etiti, 2 in Igbo-Eze South, 4 in Uzo-Uwani, and 1 in Isi-Uzo were unwilling to reveal

the areas of unethical practices and their future consequences on the cashew industry. However, after a long persuasion from one of the researchers, they responded to the questions positively. The fieldwork was conducted between January 2022 and December 2024.

Unethical Business Practices in Nsukka Region

These unethical business practices in the cashew industry included, but were not limited to, the following areas:

- Arranging cashew apples for marketing.
- Re-bagging of raw cashew nuts for marketing.
- Soaking of raw cashew nuts before marketing.
- Packaging of processed cashew nuts for marketing.

The above unethical business practices in the Nsukka region, which had become a serious threat to the survival of this industry, are appraised hereunder.

Cashew Apples for Marketing

In the Nsukka region, cashew farmers, under the pretext that cashew apples are soft, succulent, and fresh fruits that require a sort of cushion to avoid the piercing of the cashew apples, as well as causing damage to the cashew apples, applied leaves beneath the cashew apples while arranging them for marketing. This practice of applying fresh leaves on the cashew container before putting the cashew apples on top had become an avenue to defraud unsuspecting customers. These cashew containers were usually a very big basin (*Afere-azu*), local baskets, and plastic baskets, among others. To protect the cashew apples from damage, a kind of cushion was prepared on which these cashew apples rested (Obetta, 2023).

In view of this available practice in the area of study, the evil-minded and dubious cashew farmers with low future self-continuity started taking an undue advantage of this practice by using fresh leaves and other soft materials to fill half of the container, and sometimes very little space was left before putting cashew apples on top, under the pretext that the cashew apples filled the container. Many unsuspecting customers had fallen victim to these practices in Nsukka, which had caused them a huge financial loss in the industry. Many cashew farmers, in a bid to maintain the quantity of cashew apples that they usually supplied to the market daily, used leaves and other soft materials to fill the container before adding the few cashew apples to conceal the leaves (Ezea, 2023). The cost of the basin, local baskets, and plastic basket were fixed depending on the size of the basin.

Pictures of Cashew Fruits in Local Baskets



Plate 1. Cashew fruits/apples in a local basket with fresh leaves beside it
Source: Picture taken during fieldwork on 15 February 2023

The cost of cashew apples is determined by the size of the basin, the size of the cashew apples, and probably the quantity of cashew apples in the basin, if properly checked by the customer before payment (Okpe, 2022).

This has become a common phenomenon in the area of study, where most customers from Onitsha, Port-Harcourt, Lagos, and Enugu towns ensured that they verified any cashew container before payment. They did this by lifting the cashew container to weigh or check the weight, and sometimes opening a particular area of the cashew container to see the quantity of cashew apples and the quantity of fresh leaves in the cashew container. These unethical business practices among the cashew farmers had created a bad image and reputation, as well as distrust and fear in the minds of first-time cashew apple dealers. The business of cashew apples was no longer as attractive as it was before the unethical business practices featured in the business, as the future continuity of the industry was threatened (Okpe, 2022).

According to Onah (2023), a cashew farmer in Eha-Alumona, who argued that the use of fresh leaves and other materials to serve as a cushion for cashew apples was a normal practice, which the cashew apple dealers from Enugu town also carried out to protect the cashew apples from damage or piercing the succulent skin. To her, the practice would only be considered unethical and dubious when a farmer knew that the quantity of cashew apples plucked for sale was few and decided to use a large local basket, filling it up with leaves without the customer identifying it. These unethical business practices in the cashew industry caused environmental pollution in most cashew-producing communities, as the leaves were left in the market after selling the cashew apples. Most of these cashew apple markets in Nsukka are littered with leaves and other soft materials, causing environmental problems in the land.

Raw Cashew Nuts for Marketing or Exporting

This is another area in the cashew business that has attracted so many condemnations from both the stakeholders in the industry and non-stakeholders. For raw cashew nuts to be seen as worthy for export or international markets, some standards must be followed by the raw cashew nuts dealers or the raw cashew nuts merchants. These included, but were not limited to the following:

- Proper storage
- Pests and diseases-free
- Free from particles

Be that as it may, the middlemen as well as the exporters of raw cashew nuts to India, Vietnam, Brazil, and China had been alleged to have devised a dubious means of defrauding foreign investors. This dubious means is contrary to the above expected standard, which quality cashew nuts must follow or conform to. It is also important to state that once any of the above standards was compromised, the unethical business practice was witnessed. In the Nsukka region, precisely in Udenu Local Government Area, in 2001, one of the major raw cashew nuts exporters was alleged to have sent fraudulently bagged raw cashew nuts to an Indian foreign investor, who had already paid hugely for the raw cashew nuts to be supplied. The alleged major raw cashew exporter intentionally added some quantity of chippings (stones) in the course of sealing the jute bags for cashew nuts

export without recourse to the future in the business. This unsuspecting foreigner had been a close business associate of the major exporter for years and had traded with him without any unethical business practices being recorded (Onoja, 2023). In 2001, the industrial demands from foreign investors increased tremendously in the global cashew market, and foreign investors were placing orders for the supply of raw cashew nuts. Some of the foreign investors also travelled to major countries in Africa, such as Guinea-Bissau, The Gambia, Tanzania, and Nigeria, for the products. The said major exporter, with a low future self-continuity, had sold some quantity of raw cashew nuts meant to be supplied to his foreign investor who had made payment in advance in an expectation of his consignment. And the alleged marketer was unable to procure enough raw cashew nuts to replace the sold raw cashew nuts meant for his Indian investor, and he decided to indulge in unethical business practices (Onoja, 2023).

However, it is imperative for one to know that raw cashew nuts for export and sometimes for local processing were measured using the metric system, such as kilogram, to ascertain the weight and the price equivalent to the weight of the consignment or raw cashew nuts. This is why the quantity of raw cashew nuts exported yearly or annually was measured in metric tonnes instead of bags. In view of the above method of weighing or costing the value of raw cashew nuts for export, this major cashew exporter purposely added stones in the course of bagging or packaging the raw cashew nuts in the warehouse without taking cognizance of the long-term consequences on his business (Ibe, 2022).

These unethical business practices on the part of this major raw cashew nuts exporter affected and destroyed the reputation of the majority of Nsukka raw cashew exporters, like *United, We Stand Raw Cashew Dealers Association*, and National Cashew Association of Nigeria (NCAN), and to a lesser extent, African Cashew Alliance. The major foreign investors avoided Nigeria and the Nsukka region in particular. This mistrust witnessed in Nigeria affected the quantity of raw cashew nuts exported from Nigeria from 2002 until a decade after that. These foreign investors started gradually patronizing Nsukka region cashew nuts, but the patronage had never been the same. Below is a bar chart showing the volume of cashew nut export from the area of the study. The X represents the years, while Y represents the volume of export in tonnes. It indicates that in 2000, the volume of exports declined to 4,500 tonnes and later rose little 5,500 tonnes in 2001. From 2002, the export reduced to 4,000 tonnes due to the dubious act of a major exporter, and remained stagnant for almost a decade, and in 2010, rose to 6,000 tonnes.

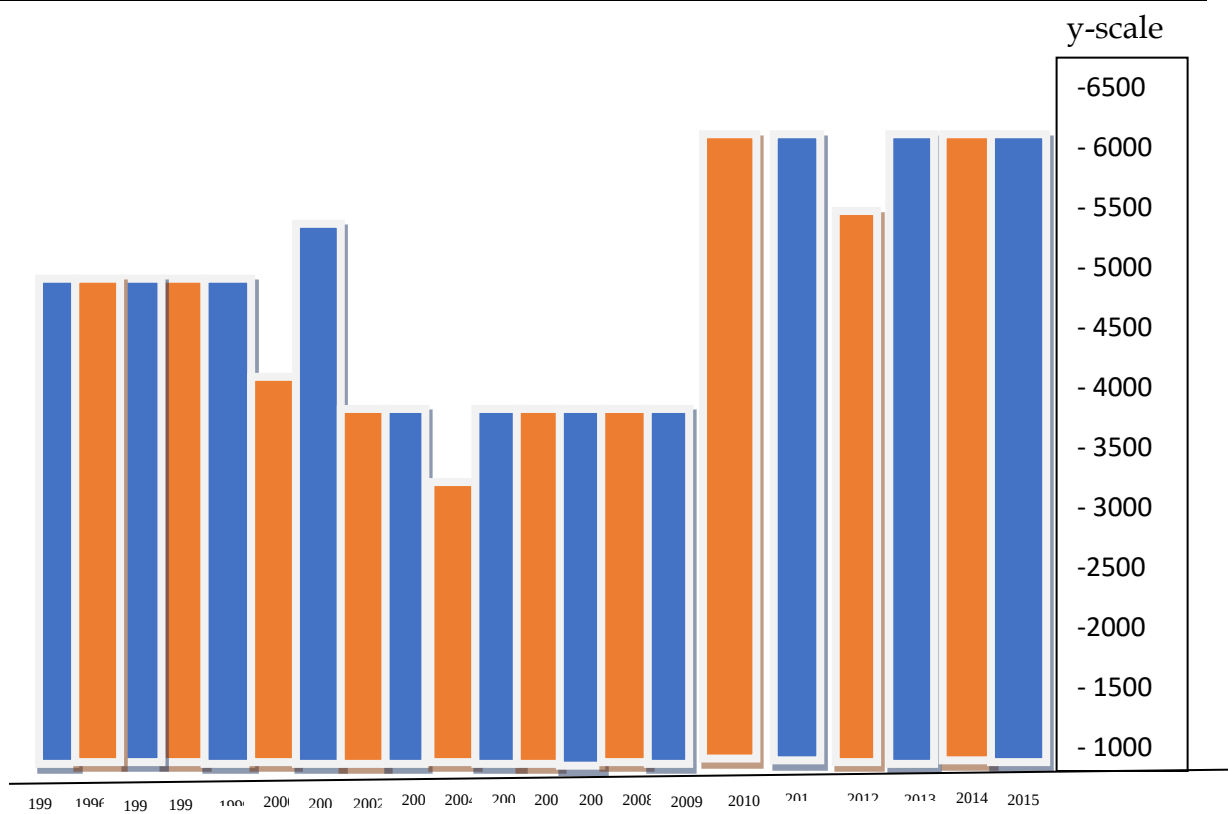
Bar Chart: Showing the level of patronage before and after the unethical practice

Vol. in tons

y-scale

x-scale

Source: Field Work



x-scale

Source: Field Work

In a bid to eradicate such unethical business practices, particularly the issue of stone, the *United We Stand Cashew Dealers Association* came up with a stringent sanction on any member caught in any unwholesome act. The sanctions include: **1** ten (10) cartons of Heineken, six (6) cartons of beer such as Life/Hero brands, eight (8) kola nuts, and four (4) kegs (twenty litres) of palm wine to be provided by the member during their monthly meetings. **2**. The member could be placed in a state of incommunicado with other members, depending on the gravity of the offence. **3**. Withdrawal of membership license. This measure had improved the strength of patronage of the foreign investors in raw cashew nuts in the Nsukka region (Iziga,2023).

Prior to this stringent sanction, some major cashew exporters intentionally avoided the proper or adequate drying of raw cashew nuts meant to be exported. Some allowed these unethical practices to ensure that the weight of the cashew nuts would be rated high when weighed or measured, which also translated into more money in their bank accounts. The handpicking of rotten and spoiled raw cashew nuts was usually avoided by the businessmen and women (Amaechi, 2023). The challenge posed by these unethical business practices within the area of study has not been totally eradicated, as pockets of sharp practices or unethical practices were still being witnessed in some areas.

Below is a table showing the quantity of cashew nuts purchased and exported or supplied by seven selected cashew nut dealers in the Nsukka region from 2001-2004, where a total decline was recorded from 2002 up to ten years after the unethical business practice. Ten (10) bags of 100kg of raw cashew are equivalent to

one (1) tonne of raw cashew nuts. So, to arrive at the figures below, we divided the total number of bags available by 10 to get the total tonnes. Mathematically, Number of bags ÷ 10 = Tonnes.

Table 1: Patronage after the Unethical Business Practice of a Major Exporter

			2001		2002		2003		2004	
S/N	Names of cashew nut dealers	Location	Quantity of cashew nuts purchased	Quantity exported	Qty purchased	Qty exported	Qty purchased	Qty exported	Qty purchased	Qty exported
1	Meche-Agro Enterprise	Obollo-Afor	30,000 bags of 100kg (3,000 tons)	23,500 bags of 100kg (2,350 tons)	30,000 bags of 100kg (3,000 tons)	15,000 bags of 100kg (1,500 tons)	30,000 bags of 100kg (3,000 tons)	15,000 bags of 100kg (1,500 tons)	30,000 bags of 100kg (3,000 tons)	15,000 bags of 100kg (1,500 tons)
2	Udoamak a Diogbe	Diogbe Igbo-Etiti	45,000 bags of 100kg (4,500 tons)	42,000 bags of 100kg (4,200 tons)	45,000 bags of 100kg (4,500 tons)	24,000 bags of 100kg (2,400 tons)	45,000 bags of 100kg (4,500 tons)	24,000 bags of 100kg (2,400 tons)	45,000 bags of 100kg (4,500 tons)	24,000 bags of 100kg (2,400 tons)
3	Onoja James	Orba	37,500 bags of 100kg (3,750 tons)	34,500 bags of 100kg (3,450Tons)	37,500 bags of 100kg (3,750 tons)	25,500 bags of 100kg (2,550 tons)	37,500 bags of 100kg (3,750 tons)	25,500 bags of 100kg (2,550 tons)	37,500 bags of 100kg (3,750 tons)	25,500 bags of 100kg (2,550 tons)
4	Mama Vincent	Orba	25,500 bags of 100kg (2,550 tons)	22,500 bags of 100kg (2,250 tons)	25,500 bags of 100kg (2,550 tons)	15,000 bags of 100kg (1,500 tons)	25,500 bags of 100kg (2,550 tons)	15,000 bags of 100kg (1,500 tons)	25,500 bags of 100kg (2,550 tons)	15,000 bags of 100kg (1,500 tons)
5	Smelter	Obollo-Afor	36,000 bags of 100kg (3,600 tons)	30,000 bags of 100kg (3,000 tons)	36,000 bags of 100kg (3,600 tons)	27,000 bags of 100kg (2,700 tons)	36,000 bags of 100kg (3,600 tons)	27,000 bags of 100kg (2,700 tons)	36,000 bags of 100kg (3,600 tons)	27,000 bags of 100kg (2,700 tons)
6	Hon. Boniface	Orba	30,000 bags of 100kg (3,000 tons)	27,000 bags of 100kg (2,700 tons)	30,000 bags of 100kg (3,000 tons)	15,000 bags of 100kg (1,500 tons)	30,000 bags of 100kg (3,000 tons)	15,000 bags of 100kg (1,500 tons)	30,000 bags of 100kg (3,000 tons)	15,000 bags of 100kg (1,500 tons)
7	Alhaji Waziri	Obollo-Afor	27,000 bags of 100kg (2,700 tons)	27,000 bags of 100kg (2,700 tons)	27,000 bags of 100kg (2,700 tons)	12,000 bags of 100kg (1,200 tons)	27,000 bags of 100kg (2,700 tons)	12,000 bags of 100kg (1,200 tons)	27,000 bags of 100kg (2,700 tons)	12,000 bags of 100kg (1,200 tons)

Source: Field Work

The above table shows a drastic decline in the volume of cashew products exported within this period (2002-2004) due to the distrust among the customers resulting from the unethical business practice of a major cashew exporter with low future self-continuity. This decline led to other consequences on the industry, such as financial loss, legal consequences and loss of reputation, and lack of trust, which have a lot of implications on the growth and sustainability of the cashew industry.

In spite of these unethical business practices witnessed here and there in Nigeria and the Nsukka region in particular, the foreign investor kept on patronizing them because Nsukka cashew nut production has a significant advantage over other producing communities of the world as a result of the low unit cost of production.

This has led to the Nsukka region being described as a cashew-producing region with the cheapest products worldwide. This was also a result of free pest and disease, as well as zero level of chemical fertilizer application, which has led to the production of organic cashew nuts that are practically impossible in most other regions of the world with low soil fertility and high infested cashew plantations and mandatory chemical control measures (Anikwe, 2022). So this quality parameter endeared Nsukka cashew nuts to both foreign and local processors/investors.

Soaking of Raw Cashew Nuts before Marketing

It has been observed with dismay that some unscrupulous cashew farmers soak raw cashew nuts in water before the market day. This was carried out by these farmers with the intention of the raw cashew nuts absorbing some quantity of water and increasing the weight of the cashew nuts when weighed on a weighing machine. This machine was to weigh the weight and determine the money equivalent to the weight of the cashew nuts. In view of this, cashew farmers, in a bid to increase the weight of the raw cashew nuts, soaked the nuts in water before taking them to the market. It is important to note that the main reason behind the use of the kilogram in checking or weighing the weight of raw cashew nuts was surely to ascertain the quality of kernel content of the cashew nut. It is argued that if the weight of the raw cashew nut was high, the quality of the kernel was good and attracted more market value in both international and domestic markets (Amaechi, 2023).

In many cashew-producing communities in the Nsukka region, when the peak of cashew season was ending, with the full commencement of the rainy season, many cashew nut farms without proper management by the farmers started germinating and sometimes rotted on the farm. These raw cashew nuts were not usually thrown away or discarded by the cashew farmers, who preferred selling them to major cashew dealers who buy from the cashew farmers by measuring the weight of cashew nuts. In view of the quantity of cashew, there was no way each bag of cashew would be emptied, sorted, and re-bagged before payment or purchase was made. The cashew nut farmers and raw cashew traders capitalized on this to include rotten cashew nuts and other unwanted materials in the bags. The major cashew dealers, as well as other men and women in the cashew industry, devised a means of checking or ascertaining the quality of raw cashew kernels before payment was made. They made use of a small hand machine called a cutter to cut or dissect the raw cashew nut to see the quality of the kernel. This was devised due to the unethical business practices or sharp practices carried out in the industry.

At the close of the peak of cashew season in any year, the market value of cashew usually spiked, and many cashew nut farmers with poor cashew management ensured that all cashew nuts in their farms were properly harvested by using a stick to turn the fallen cashew leaves to ensure that no raw cashew nut was left unpicked or unharvested. With the poor management by the cashew farmers, the majority of raw cashew nuts harvested must have germinated or changed colour due to their overstay on the farm without harvesting. These cashew nuts harvested in this method were not usually sold to the local cashew nut processors, as they would not even buy them. The cashew farmers, knowing full well that the only option left for them was the bulk buyers or cashew middlemen (major cashew dealers), who used machines in weighing the cashew nuts without proper scrutiny of the product for

high or low grade (Amaechi,2023). The raw cashew nuts harvested under such conditions and during the rainy season were usually marketed by the cashew farmers through the above channel of marketing, involving unethical practices. Below is a picture of a small hand machine called a cutter used to cut raw cashew nuts to ascertain the quality of the kernel before supply is made.



Plate 2: A raw cashew nut cutter used in bisecting raw cashew nuts to verify the quality of the kernel; picture taken during fieldwork on 30 May 2023

Packaging of Processed Cashew Nuts for Marketing

This was another area where the women committed or indulged in all manner of unethical business practices in a bid to outsmart their customers and the general public. In the cashew industry, the packaging stage was a crucial area that most of the women in this business took very seriously, as the outlook of a packaged cashew nut determined how the general public would value the product. The local method of packaging processed cashew nuts in the Nsukka region involved a well-crafted procedure, where a plastic funnel, depending on the price they wanted to package, would be provided, and cellophane used in packaging the product would be inserted into the plastic funnel. This plastic funnel served as a foundation on which the processed cashew nuts would be packaged. The person, with a low future self-continuity, prior to this point, had sorted the processed cashew nuts according to their quality (Onuh,2023). The sorting was arranged thus:

- The whole cashew nut/unbroken cashew nut.
- The broken cashew nuts (Eyogiyo) or pieces.

With this arrangement in place, the women who would pick the unbroken cashew nuts to go round the cellophane in the plastic funnel, after which the “*Eyogiyo*”, that is, the pieces or broken cashew nuts, would be poured inside or put in the middle to avoid notice by their customers and the general public. On seeing the packaged cashew nuts, it would be attractive, but once it is opened, these pieces would be the majority of the packaged cashew nuts (Onuh,2023).

According to Odoh (2021), in one of his works on cashew nuts in Obollo-Afor,
Some of our co-dealers play or carry out sharp practices on their customers during the packaging of the products. Some dealers, during packaging into different sizes,

deliberately scoop a handful of broken cashew nuts (*Eyogiyo*) into the packaged ones and use the unbroken ones or whole nuts to cover them all round to avoid notice or detection of the broken cashew nuts inside the package. These people sell these for the same price to unsuspecting customers in the name of well-packaged ones.

The above assertion vividly confirms the unethical business practices going on in the cashew industry in a bid to circumvent the proper packaging of cashew nuts and acquire an unlimited wealth. This trend of practice had permeated the entire system or industry that the prospective customer would want to be present during the packaging of processed cashew nuts in many places to ensure that the pieces were not scooped into the packaged one (Odoh, 2021). It is also important to note that in every twelve, there must be **Judas Iscariot**, one who would go contrary to the established rules and regulations or the ethics of a particular business. As seen in the cashew industry in the Nsukka region, Southeastern Nigeria, with a lot of consequences on the growth of this industry.

Consequences of the Unethical Business Practices on the Cashew Industry in Nsukka Region

The consequences of unethical business practices on the Cashew industry in the Nsukka region remain an albatross in the growth and sustainability of this industry in the study area. The following consequences were identified in the course of this research.

Financial Consequences: These raw cashew nut dealers, especially the major marketers, lost a humongous amount of money after one of them fraudulently exported raw cashew nuts mixed with chippings to an Indian investor. The financial loss occurred due to the drastic fall in patronage by the foreign investors in the Nsukka region. Many of these foreign investors abandoned major cashew dealers in the Nsukka region for almost a decade before regaining the lost trust and confidence in them. This unethical business practice, with its long-term consequences, remained a serious challenge to Nsukka Raw Cashew Nuts Dealers, as their foreign investors, after a decade, kept recounting the financial damage caused by one of them to their business colleague. For almost ten good years, the cashew industry was stagnated, and both the genuine cashew exporters and those with low future self-continuity suffered financial losses (Apeh, 2023). However, the legal battle between Mrs Asogwa Rita and her customer based in Port Harcourt caused a lot of financial damage to Mrs. Asogwa Rita, which consequently led to her bankruptcy and excruciating financial difficulty for her entire family after she was made to refund the money deposited in her account (Iziga, 2023). The financial consequence of unethical business practices in the study region has remained an indelible mark on the cashew industry, as the false fruits/ fresh cashew fruits or apples marketers are always conscious of any unethical practices in the course of buying from the cashew farmers. The non-Nsukka-based processed cashew nuts dealers are also very conscious of any unethical practice in the course of packaging their processed cashew nuts for the waybill. These people prefer coming in person to witness the packaging to placing orders for a waybill. Madam Chinasa, who lost her numerous customers in Abuja and Enugu towns due to her involvement in

unethical business practices, which consequently led to an untold financial difficulty for her family, is still not forgotten by the cashew dealers (Ezema, 2023).

Legal Consequences or Litigation: In severe cases of unethical misconduct, it leads to a severe legal battle, which could result in the loss of time, large fines, and other penalties such as a jail term. However, this brings to mind the legal battle between Mrs. Asogwa Rita, a processed cashew nuts dealer, and Grace Akor, her customer, a processed cashew nuts marketer based in Port Harcourt. Mrs. Asogwa Rita supplied the latter processed cashew nuts, fraudulently packaged with broken cashew nuts concealed inside the supplied cashew nuts worth half a million naira. In the course of marketing the supplied cashew nuts, it was discovered by Grace Akor's customers that the consignment was fraudulently packaged by the supplier. This resulted in an unending legal battle, which made Mrs Asogwa Rita pay for the damages incurred by her Port Harcourt-based customer (Nkechi, 2023). The cost of legal battles can also last for years, and millions of dollars/naira would be spent depending on the person or group of persons involved and the level of unethical business practice carried out. In addition to this, all the culprits who indulged in unethical business practices would be made to face criminal charges. This also has a serious consequence on the growth and sustainability of the cashew industry.

Loss of Reputation and Customers' Trust: When an unethical business practice occurs in a business setting, there is a high chance it will be publicized by co-dealers and other business associates. This, in turn, will lead to the company losing its credibility, resulting in customers abandoning purchases with such a cashew dealer and loss of respect for the cashew dealer. When a cashew dealer starts making a decision that is unethical decision, it leads to his/her employees losing a lot of respect for their boss. When this occurs, it can be difficult for the cashew dealer to gain back the respect and trust that has been lost. It also causes problems for them to run a successful business when their team feels as if they are making poor or unethical business choices. Employees may also feel resentful towards their boss. This loss of reputation and customers' trust leads to the cashew dealer's customers losing trust in transacting any business with the dealer, as they are always suspicious of the activities of the cashew dealer. In Obollo-Afor, Madam Chinasa, a processed cashew nuts dealer or supplier, lost many of her customers in Enugu town and Abuja due to these unethical business practices, which later led to the folding of the business establishment as many of the customers lost trust in her packaged cashew nuts (Ezema, 2023). This unethical business practice perpetrated by some cashew dealers with low future self-continuity tends to be a serious challenge to the growth of this cashew industry, resulting in long-term stagnation of the business and final collapse of the industry.

Conclusion

This work x-rayed the unethical business practices in the cashew industry in the Nsukka region of Southeastern Nigeria from 2000 to 2024, using future self-continuity as a concept on which the work is anchored. It argued that the unethical business practice is an evil wind that blows no one any good, as the stakeholders indulge in this economic sabotage with no regard for the future continuity of the cashew industry. The work also identified the various areas in the industry where these unethical business practices are seen and those involved in the act. People

with low future self-continuity are only interested in the instant benefit without taking cognizance of the long-term consequences or implications of their decisions and actions on the industry.

Finally, the work captures the disconnection between the present selves and the future selves of the stakeholders in the cashew industry in the Nsukka region. It also laid bare the level of low future self-continuity to the extent that the majority of the stakeholders involved in the act perceive their future selves as strangers, which lessens or reduces the motivation to act in ways that would benefit their future selves and the society at large. This lack of continuity in their future selves led some to take decisions that are unethical in the industry for an instant benefit, leading to an untold financial loss, legal consequences, and loss of reputation and customers' trust in the cashew industry. The paper recommends a cashew products regulatory body.

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