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Consumer Awareness and Attitude towards Baobab Products in Kenya

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Abstract

Baobab (*Adansonia digitata* L.) shows high market potential in arid and semi-arid areas of Kenya. It is widely traded by few actors, but its products occupy a small market share. The benefits of baobab products are yet to be communicated to consumers. This study aimed to examine awareness and attitudes of rural and urban consumers in Kenya towards baobab products. Data on socio-economic characteristics, baobab product awareness, and attitude towards baobab products was collected from 353 consumers in rural and urban markets in Kenya. A pretested questionnaire was administered to each consumer through personal interviews. Descriptives were used to analyse awareness level on baobab products. Zero-truncated Poisson regression model was used to assess factors influencing awareness of baobab products. Descriptive and exploratory factor analysis was used to assess the attitudes of the local consumers towards baobab products. The results showed a mean awareness score of 5.92 and 6.45 for urban consumers and rural consumers respectively, this is a clear indication of low awareness level compared to the maximum awareness score of 21. The model results revealed that age ($p < 0.05$), gender ($p < 0.01$) and group membership ($p < 0.01$) influenced consumer awareness positively, while income level (0.05) had a negative influence. Descriptive showed that considerable percentage of consumers expressed positive attitudes, with (95%), (77%) expressing positive attitude on baobab pulp being food for all, and health benefits accrued from consumption of pulp respectively. Exploratory factor analysis produced five factors that explained 63.18% of the total explained variance. The first factor was ‘health, nutritive value and culture’ which accounted for 17.01% of the total explained variance. Other factors were ‘product availability and freshness’ (12.50%), production process and affordability (11.56%), taste and income value (11.55%), age and social class (10.56%). Group membership is essential, it provides links to access a variety of information that is vital in raising baobab products awareness level. Finally, improvement of product labelling, certification and freshness, awareness creation through formal and informal education will positively shape consumers attitudes.

Keywords: African baobab, attitudes, awareness, utilisation