



Tropentag, September 15-17, 2021, hybrid conference

“Towards shifting paradigms in agriculture
for a healthy and sustainable future”

Factors Explaining Purchase Choices of Packaged Child Food in Kenya and Benin

INA CRAMER¹, IRIS SCHRÖTER¹, DIBA TABI ROBA², GEORGES DJOHY³, HUSSEIN WARIO²,
MARCUS MERGENTHALER¹

¹*South Westphalia University of Applied Science, Agricultural Economics, Germany*

²*Center for Research and Development in Drylands, Kenya*

³*University of Parakou, National School of Statistics, Planning and Demography (ENSPD), Benin*

Abstract

Child malnutrition is high in drylands and is, among other factors, influenced by choice of child food. Particularly in peri-urban areas, diverse packaged child foods are commercially available and increasingly used in child feeding. Shifting paradigms towards healthier and more sustainable product choices, e.g. through nudging or other interventions, therefore presupposes a comprehensive understanding of parents' motives underlying food choice for their children. Since data on behavioural routines related to choices of child food from Sub-Saharan Africa is rare, the present study aims to reveal Kenyan and Beninese parent's food choices and points out similarities and divergences between both countries.

Shops and supermarkets in the town of Marsabit, northern Kenya and in Nikki, Bani-koara and Parakou in northern Benin offering a larger than average range of child food products were selected for data collection. Shop keepers in these shops were interviewed (computer assisted personal interviews) and asked to identify various categories of child feeding products offered in their shops and the top and slow selling products in each category. In addition, they shared their assessment, why customers like or dislike the mentioned products. An online form was used to collect the data and participants could choose predefined reason and add additional ones.

The categories chosen by shopkeepers in both countries were similar as were the main reasons and frequency of reasons given to explain the purchase choices: taste, nutritional value and price.

A combination of reasons suggest that purchase decisions are in many cases influenced by visual cues. Subconscious beliefs caused by the packaging design, brand and presentation of products are assumed to impact purchase choices. The importance of the influence of packaging design and presentation on parents' food choices suggests that nudging might break up existing behavioural routines. As nudges are not universal but depend on culture specific features, learning about attractive attributes will help to develop a more tailored way of presenting child food. This would help to promote more sustainable and healthier food choices, thereby making locally produced and processed foods more attractive and breaking the dominance of standard child food produced by multinationals.

Keywords: Child feeding, malnutrition, nudging

Contact Address: Ina Cramer, South Westphalia University of Applied Science, Agricultural Economics, Lübecker Ring 2, 59494 Soest, Germany, e-mail: cramer.ina@fh-swf.de