

Urban market opportunities for high quality cassava products in Ghana

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ABSTRACT

Growing urban populations and changing food preferences potentially offer new market opportunities that could be exploited by rural micro-scale processors and small and medium scale enterprises. This paper reports on a market assessment study conducted in four urban areas in Ghana. It was found that amongst the target group for the survey (young professionals in Living Standards Measure groups 5-8), there was a high willingness to buy into the concept of purchasing hygienically prepared and packaged cassava products. The majority (90%) said that they were likely to purchase. Price, hygienic manufacture and packaging of products were determined to be key criteria for adoption of the products. Acceptable retail price ranges for different product types are reported.

INTRODUCTION

The production and marketing of traditionally processed cassava products are important income generating activities in many countries in sub-Saharan Africa. As well as creating great social challenges in these countries, urbanisation bring economic opportunities, such as the expansion of the middle class and its demand for high quality and convenient foods. This study was carried out to determine the public's acceptance of hygienically processed and packaged convenient forms of traditional cassava products in Ghana. These products included *fufu* (non-fermented), *gari*, *kokonte* and *agbelima*. Specifically the study sought to: determine the public's awareness of hygienically processed and packaged products; establish levels of acceptance; ascertain attitudes towards the products; suggest interventions that could lead to positive attitudinal change and to determine the optimum price levels for these products.

METHOD

Both quantitative and qualitative approaches were used to collect data. Interviews were conducted in homes of respondents (350 in four locations) to test reactions to hygienically prepared and packaged *fufu*, *kokonte*, *gari* and *agbelima*. Respondents were purposively selected to be in the middle class Living Standards Measure (LSM) groups (5 to 8). Selection also focussed on: homemakers of both sexes in households where either partners or parents have jobs outside the house, or singles whose professions make them

spend less time home and therefore have the need for convenient, quick cooking foods; people within 25 to 40 years age bracket.

Consumer reactions to instant *fufu* powder (the only new concept amongst the cassava products) were evaluated with consumers (approximately 50% of the total sample). A sample of the product was provided to this sub-sample after the first interview. Arrangements were made to re-interview those respondents within one or two days of the product being consumed.

RESULTS

The sample of urban consumers was biased towards what could be generally considered the growing middle class (young professions in the LSMs 5-8) in Ghana. The majority (61%) of these consumers make their regular food purchases from traditional urban markets whereas 22% use supermarkets. The results of the survey indicate that a wide range of staple foods are eaten in the household. These include rice, *kenkey*, yam, cocoyam, plantain, *gari*, *fufu*, *banku*/*akple*, *kokonte*, *yake yake*, spaghetti, potatoes, beans, plantain, *aprapransa*, *attieke* and *tuozafo*. Cassava-based foods formed about 39 % of the foods mentioned by name (this should not be taken as a measure of volume consumed). Of these cassava foods, *fufu* is generally preferred.

All consumers, regardless of their ethnic backgrounds, eat most of the common foods. For the target group, food choices were mainly influenced by availability, convenience in preparation and affordability. Of the 350 people interviewed, 138 (39%) of them were aware of at least one of the packaged cassava based products. Awareness levels for the different products were *fufu powder*, 35%; *gari*, 21%; *kokonte*, 7%; and *agbelima* 4%. When asked about their willingness to buy into the concept of purchasing hygienically prepared and packaged cassava products, the majority (90%) said that they were likely to purchase. This figure is high and indicates the possibility of over-claim.

On average, more than half of those aware of the concept had tried at least one of the products. The fact that no respondent refused the test product also shows how likely members of this group are to experiment with new products. The majority (86%) of those who had previously tried one or more of the products said they were satisfied with the experience. Furthermore, there was a slight rise in purchase intention level (90% - 93%) after the powdered *fufu* product trial.

More than half (58%) of those who are aware of processed and packaged cassava based products had tried one of the products at least once. Using this as a broad indicator and coupled with the high acceptance level, it can be speculated that about 50% of the target group, young professionals in LSMs 5-8, will be likely to try the concept if they become aware of it..

The perceived quality associated with processed and packaged cassava- based products leads to respondents feeling that they are better than traditionally prepared ones.

Respondents had these key perceptions about packaged cassava based products: they sell at relatively high prices; they may have an unpleasant taste and they may contain food additives. These perceptions need to be taken into account in promotion of the products.

Optimum prices and acceptable price ranges for the products were determined and are detailed in Table 1. A number of important factors were identified by respondents for the development and promotion of high quality cassava product (Figure 1). The most important were affordability, hygienic manufacture and packaging.

CONCLUSION

This was a preliminary piece of research as part of a cassava commercialisation project. This type of market research gives indications of the likely success of particular interventions. It also helps in the identification of the factors that need to be taken into account in making such interventions.

From the observations made in this particular study, it was concluded that there is potential for the production of high quality cassava products for urban markets in Ghanaian urban centres. Price, hygienic manufacture and packaging of products were determined to be key criteria for adoption of the products. The price information will be used in the design of processing systems to ensure that the final products are affordable to the target group.

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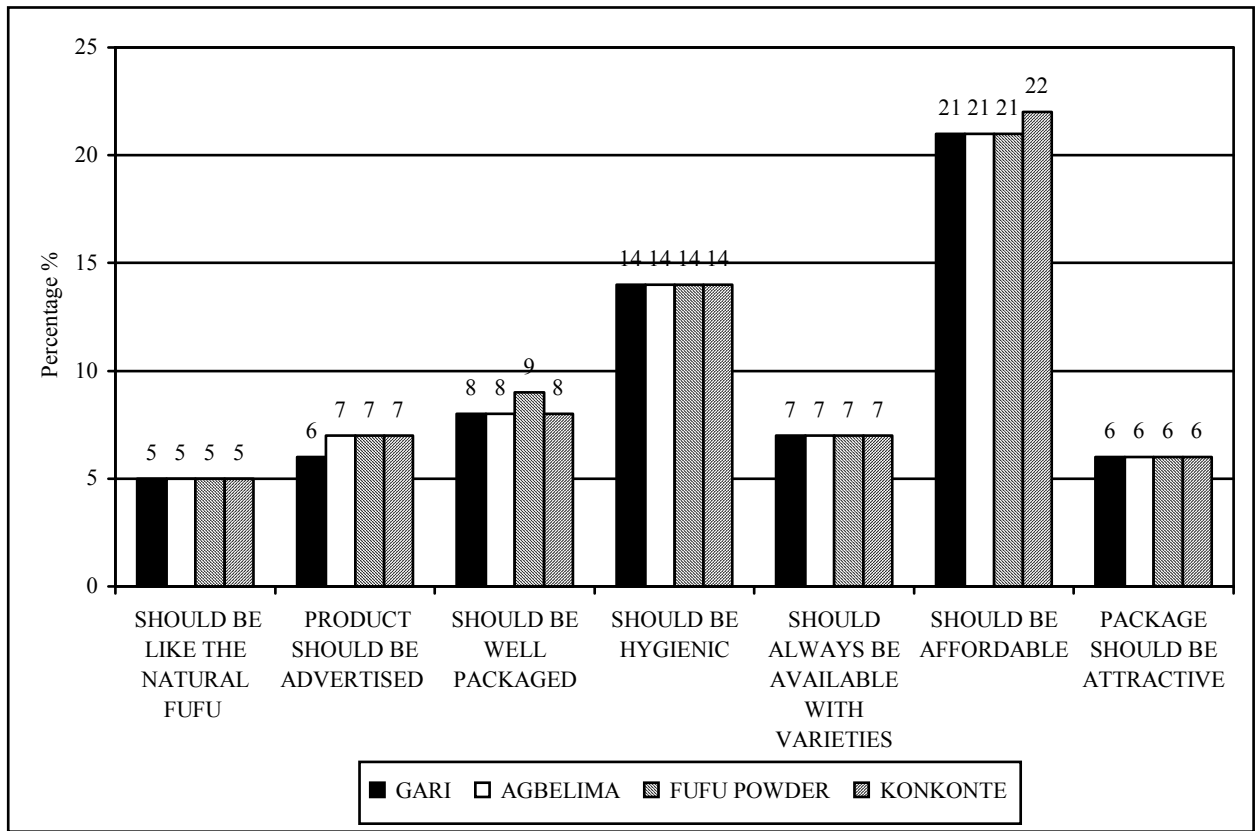


Figure 1. Factors to be considered in making interventions.

Table 1. Optimum and acceptable price ranges for high quality processed cassava products in urban areas in Ghana.

	Optimum Price For 2.7KG	Acceptable Price Range for 2.7KG	Optimum Price For 1KG	Acceptable Price Range for 1KG
Fufu Powder	¢5,000	¢3,001-¢6,000	¢1,851	¢1,111-¢2,222
Gari	¢3,000	¢1,001-¢6,000	¢1,111	¢370-¢2,222
Kokonte	¢2,000	<¢1,000-¢3,000	¢740	¢370-¢1,111
Agbelima	¢2,500	¢1,001-¢3,000	¢925	¢370-¢1,111

Data collected 2001.