

# Local or Imported Chicken Meat: Which is the Preference of Rural Ghanaians?

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## ABSTRACT

This study investigates the preference of rural Ghanaians between local and imported chicken meat since various research on consumers' preference for local or imported goods have largely focused on urban dwellers and durable products. Relying on 90 participants in three rural communities of Ghana, the study finds that local chicken meat is preferred to imported chicken meat on the grounds of quality (safety), taste, patriotism, and tenderness. The preference is also influenced by participant's age, marital status, and number of children. The results here do not support the country of origin effect argument in other studies. Again, the participants strongly indicate their support for the ban on importation of chicken meat into the country for various reasons. Based on the results, recommendations are offered.

**Keywords:** Country of Origin, Poultry, Rural, Ghana

## INTRODUCTION

There has been a significant change in global trade over the last two decades creating opportunities for businesses to exploit (Apil, 2006). These opportunities stem from the fact that the process of globalization has reduced the world into one market that enables businesses' unrestricted access to other foreign market (Ismail, Masood and Tawab, 2012) to a large extent. Businesses are often motivated to go beyond their domestic market for a number of reasons including growth, saturation of national markets, government incentives, and competition (Sae-Jiu, 2007). An advantage of businesses going into other countries due to globalization is that consumers get variety of products to choose from apart from the goods that are locally produced in their own countries (Egyir, Adu-Nyako and Okafor, 2012).

However, global brands are often criticized for threatening the local industries in developing countries who are mostly net importers of goods from the western countries. One of such products which have been observed to be gaining market in developing countries especially Africa is poultry meat. Estimation for the past three decades shows about 669 cases of poultry import surges in developing countries of which 50% of these surges of import took

place in Africa (FAO, 2006). The FAO's (2003) revelation that the Sub-Saharan Africa's share in the world's chicken production of only 1.5% (Dorémus-Mege, Gaudard, Horman, Hermelin and Grodent, 2013) clearly justifies such huge importation. From the early 1990s, the coastal countries of Western and Central Africa have seen a rise in the amount of chicken coming from the European Union (EU) to the extent that in 2003, there was a reduction in the demand for EU poultry meat for all markets with the exception of Sub-Saharan Africa (Hermelin, 2004). Meanwhile, the rate of poultry meat importation in Africa has generated great concerns or complains from both policy makers and the citizens due to stiffer competition such goods offer locally produced poultry leading to their poor performance based on demand or demise of such local companies.

One thing that may account for the low demand for locally produced goods including chicken meat due to international trade is the country of origin (COO) effect where consumers are likely to prefer imported products as a result of some peculiar features they have over local ones. The COO has been explained by Elliott and Cameron (1994) to mean the positive or negative influence that a good's country of manufacture/production may have on consumers' decision processes or subsequent behaviour

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(Watson and Wright, 1999). In the process of making decision about a product, COO according to Cordell, (1992) provides extrinsic cue that ultimately influences consumer's decision about a product.

It is worthy to note that COO argument has received more than 750 published studies (Papadopoulos and Heslop 2002) excluding unpublished conference papers, working papers and works in other languages apart from English (Li, 2010). Watson and Wright (1999) in their review of literature on COO noted, the importance of COO on consumer decision making has been questioned by some studies, but recent studies have proven that COO affects consumers' final decision making. According to Knight et al. (2007) as cited in Holdershaw, Gendall and Case, (2011) "purchasing of high-involvement durable products" has been the focus of studies on COO despite Hoffman (2000) assertion that COO effect is seen in consumers' choice of food. Again most studies on COO have focused on urban dwellers with little known of the rural dwellers. It is against this background that this study researches into the preference of rural Ghanaians concerning locally reared chicken and imported chicken meat.

Ghana, mainly an agrarian economy, does not meet the requirement of meat demanded by consumers and thus import poultry (Opoku, 2012) of which chicken dominates from the EU and other countries. In 2010 for instance, local production of poultry could meet only 10% of the total demand as a result 90% of the total poultry meat consumption were imported to supplement the local production which is made of local and exotic breeds of chicken, turkey, Guinea fowl, duck, quail, pigeon, and ostrich (Evans School Policy Analysis and Research, 2010). The high spate of poultry importation into the country has received a lot of complains from both poultry farmers and policy makers in the country since it is believed to have greatly affected local poultry farmers negatively.

Meanwhile it has been found that urban dwellers in Ghana have shown preference for imported poultry products over the years due to their comparatively cheaper price, their ready-to-use nature, and rapid growth in the restaurant, hotel, and fast food sector (Global Agriculture Information Network, 2011), but not much is known about the case of rural Ghanaians where majority of local chicken production takes place. A research that will unravel the preference of rural Ghanaians towards

locally produced chicken or imported chicken meat is therefore necessary to avoid the likelihood conclusion that Ghanaians in general prefer imported chicken as it will help in providing answers to the following questions: Do rural Ghanaians prefer imported or local chicken meat and what are the reasons? Is there any relationship between their preference and demographic features? What are the impressions of rural Ghanaians on a ban on the importation of chicken meat?

There is a dearth of COO studies in Ghana. The few ones such as Quartey and Abor (2010), Bamfo (2012) and Opoku and Akor (2009) all focused on the urban dwellers. In their study, Opoku and Akor (2009) found that consumers place premium on the country of origin than any other attribute a product has. They revealed that taste and superior quality influence Ghanaians preference for foreign labeled goods to made in Ghana labeled goods. Quartey and Abor(2010) on the other hand found more than half of the respondents indicating a strong preference for local textile products. However, more than half of the respondents again did not support a ban on imported textiles. This is quite surprise since one would have expected that the majority who preferred local textiles, should have shown interest in seeing to a ban on the importation of textiles. Bamfo (2012) concluded in his study that Ghanaian consumers have a level of attitude towards made in Ghana goods that will help not boost local production.

In other West Africa countries like Nigeria, Oyeniyi (2009) found that consumers' evaluation of foreign product was based on quality, followed by branding, style, design, packaging and price. Ogunnaike (2010) also found that most of the respondents in his study preferred foreign made textiles to locally made textiles. This preference was determined by factors such as the image a person has of himself, marketing strategies, quality, colour, past experience, price, and product package. Also Okechuku and Onyemah (1999) found that Nigerian consumers rate goods with 'Made in Nigeria' label lower than labels from more economically developed countries indicating that they have negative image about made in Nigeria goods. Further outcome shows that the consumers' choice for foreign goods can be attributed to superior reliability and technological advancement of foreign products.

Khattak and Shah (2011) in their study of Pakistanis attitudes towards non-local product concluded that consumers from developing countries have a strong

and positive image about the products of the developed countries like USA and other European countries. Sai-Ju (2007) also found that consumers in Thailand have positive attitude towards foreign apparel than Thai apparel with regard to durability, quality, attractiveness, fashionableness, brand name, and choice of styles. Again they noted that young Thai consumers preferred apparel originating in western countries more than eastern countries. In their study Ghazali, Othman, Yahya and Ibrahim (2008) concluded that the Malaysian consumer attaches the country of origin information to the quality of a product that he purchases.

Ettenson (1993) studies on consumers in Russia, Poland, and Hungary established that consumers in these countries placed less emphasis on price than country of origin when purchasing Television sets (Opoku and Akor 2009). A 1996 published work by Klenosky, Benet and Chatraba found that Czech Republicans had a preference for German products as compared to products from the Czech Republic. Holdershaw et al. (2011) concluded New Zealand consumers prefer to buy produce displaying a 'Product of New Zealand' label, to those imported abroad or without any label to show the country of origin.

## METHODOLOGY

### The Study Communities

The study took place in three rural communities in the Eastern Region of Ghana namely Saforo, Kwamoso, and Adawso from the Akuapem North Municipality. The vegetation of these areas is forest with shrub and semi-forest. The topography of the areas is characterized by presence of deep valleys making farming activities very difficult. There are two rainy seasons with the major rainfall occurring between May and August, the minor rainfall in October. Average annual rainfall is about 1,270 mm. Mean temperatures range between 24°C and 30°C and night temperature between 13°C and 24°C. The major economic activity here is farming where farmers are mainly into maize, cassava, plantain, oil palm and cocoa production.

### Sampling Size and Data Collection

The population for the study was basically the residents of Saforo, Kwamoso, and Adawso communities in the

Akuapem North Municipality, Ghana. A sample size of 90 comprising 30 participants from each community was taken for the study. Questionnaires were used for collecting responses from the subjects selected for the study and it included both open and close ended questions so that respondents were not limited in their answers given. Because the questionnaires were written in English language, there was the need to interpret in their local language Twi, for those who could not read and write to solicit the needed information from them. Their responses were translated in English language appropriately.

### Analysis Technique

The responses to the questionnaire were entered into the SPSS software. Descriptive statistics in the form of frequencies and percentage distributions were used to generate results from participants. The responses to the opened ended questions were used to support the quantitative results. Cross tabulation was also done to measure the relationship between the background of respondents and their preference for imported or local chicken meat.

## RESEARCH FINDINGS

The results of the research were analyzed using SPSS and were presented in the form of frequency tables mainly under major sections which include socio-economic determinants, frequency of chicken consumption, consumer preference for chicken type, and reasons for consumers' preference.

### Respondents' Background Information

The background information shown in Table 1 tells that out of the 90 respondents, 48 representing 53.3% were females while 42 respondents representing 46.7% were males. Also, the majority of the respondents that is 41 (45.6%) were aged between 21 and 40, 18 (20%) were aged between 41 and 60 while another 20% were less than 20 years and the remaining 13 (14.4%) were above 60 years. On marital status, about 48 (53.3%) were married, 28 (31.1%) single, 11 (12.2%) were widowed and 3 (3.3%) were divorced. From the table it is seen that the majority 58 (64.4%) had children between 1 to 7, and the minority 1 (1.1%) had more than 10 children.

**Table 1: Sex, Age, Marital Status and Number of Children of Participants**

<i>Sex</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Female	48	53.3
Male	42	46.7
<i>Age</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Less than 20	18	20.0
21 – 40	41	45.6
41 – 60	18	20.0
61 and above	13	14.4
<i>Marital Status</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Single	28	31.1
Married	48	53.3
Widowed	11	12.2
Divorced	3	3.3
<i>Number of Children</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
None	27	30.0
1 – 3	29	32.2
4 – 6	29	32.2
7 – 9	4	4.4
10 and above	1	1.1

\*Source: Author's estimation from participants' response

From Table 2, all the participants had some level of formal education with Junior High School (JHS) graduates 36 (43.6%) forming the majority and 6 (7.6%) attaining tertiary education. Also, the 63 (97.3%) participants who provided their income level earned less than GH¢ 500.00 a month and the rest 6 (8.7%) earned above GH¢ 500.00. Lastly there were 70 (77.8%) who were employed mainly in farming (41), trading (15) teaching (5), dressmaking (3), carpentry (2), food selling (2), barbering (1), and hairdressing (1).

**Table 2: Educational Level, Employment Status and Income Level of Participants**

<i>Education Qualification</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Primary	9	11.5
Junior High School	36	46.2
Senior High School/Vocational	27	34.6
Tertiary	6	7.6
<i>Employment Status</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Unemployed	20	22.2
Employed	70	77.8
<i>Income</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Less than GH ¢500	63	91.3
GH¢500 – GH¢1000	6	8.7

\*Source: Author's estimation from participants' response

## Participants Frequency of Chicken Consumption and Preference

When asked to indicate their preference between local and imported chicken meat, majority 69 (76.7%) indicated they preferred local chicken meat and the rest 21(23.3%) had preference for imported chicken. So it is clear that rural households may have some preference for local goods especially chicken as seen from the tables. From Table 3, it is found that respondents had different frequency for chicken consumption mainly as part of their soup and stew preparation but the majority 36 (40%) consumed it on occasions like birthday, festivals, and funerals. This was followed by 27 (30%) who consumed chicken meat weekly, 21 (23%) consumed it monthly and 2 (2.2%) consumed it annually. There were 4 (4.4%) who consumed chicken more than once a week.

**Table 3: Frequency of Chicken Consumption**

<i>Frequency of Consumption</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Occasionally	36	40.0
Weekly	27	30.0
More than once a week	4	4.4
Monthly	21	23.3
Annually	2	2.2

\*Source: Author's estimation from participant's response

The reasons given by the 69 (76.7%) participants for preferring local chicken meat were concerned with seven main issues namely the taste, quality (safety), income level, availability, tenderness of local chicken, affordability, and patriotism. From Table 4 it is clear that quality (safety) (98.6%), taste (98.6%), tenderness (92.8%), and patriotism (97.1%) occupied the topmost four reasons why participants preferred local chicken to imported chicken meat. The least reason was affordability which had 8.7%. Those 21 (23.3%) who preferred imported chicken meat were more concerned about the affordability, availability, taste and tenderness.

Below are some statements from the respondents who preferred local chicken meat to support the reasons for their choice:

*The local chicken is delicious and of good quality.*

*The local chicken compared to imported ones is free from chemicals.*

**Table 4: Reasons for Participants' Choice of Chicken Meat**

<i>Reasons</i>	<i>Local chicken</i>		<i>Imported chicken</i>	
	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage*</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage+</i>
Quality	68	98.6	2	9.5
More Affordable	6	8.7	21	100.0
Taste	68	98.6	18	85.7
Patriotism	67	97.1	20	95.2
Income level	49	71.0	2	9.5
Tenderness	64	92.8	20	95.2
Availability	30	43.5	21	100.0

\*Multiple responses from the 69 participants who liked local chicken, + Multiple responses the 21 participants who liked imported chicken

\*Source: Author's estimation from participants' response

*As a Ghanaian I have to eat made in Ghana products.*

*Aside earning income for my country, local chicken is good for my health.*

### **Impression on the Ban of Chicken Importation**

With respect to a ban on the importation of chicken meat, 69 (76.7%) of all participants who liked local chicken indicated their desire to see the government place a ban on the importation of chicken meat into the country on three main grounds:

- i. Unwholesome nature of imported chicken meat
- ii. Promotion of local poultry business
- iii. Non-nutritious nature of imported chicken meat

These were some of their responds;

*I will appreciate the ban on the importation of chicken meats because they are full of chemicals....they contain harmful growth hormones, which are harmful to our health.*

*Oh it's good because they are not nutritious compared to the local ones.*

*The imported chicken meats are inferior so a ban on them can help the country health wise.*

*This ban idea will help because it will help boost the production level of local poultry farmers.*

*When chicken meats are not imported those who rear poultry in the country will get a lot of revenue.*

The 23.3% who were against the ban on importation had these reasons to give:

*I will not be happy because the imported chicken is affordable as compared to local chicken.*

*I will not appreciate the idea because it is more readily available.*

### **Participants' Background and Chicken Preference**

The Pearson chi square test was used to analyze the relationship between participants' preference and their background (Tables 5 and 6).

From both Tables 5 and 6, it is clear that there is no relationship between preference for type of chicken and the sex of respondents, number of participant's children living in the cities, distance to the nearest urban center, employment status and level of income of participants. However, there is a relationship between participant's age, number of children and marital status. Thus participants who aged between 21-40 years, have between 1-3 children and are married are more likely to prefer local chicken to imported ones.

### **DISCUSSION**

The study examined rural Ghanaian folks' preference towards locally produced chicken meat as against imported ones. Data gathered from the questionnaire administered to 90 participants in three rural areas of Adawso, Saforo, and Kwamoso in the Eastern region of Ghana revealed that large proportion of the participants consumed chicken meat occasionally while others consumed it weekly, monthly, and annually. Majority of

**Table 5: Chi Square Test for Participants' Background and Chicken Preference**

Variable	Imported chicken	Local chicken	Chi square value
Sex			1.208
Female	9	39	
Male	12	30	
Age			8.149**
Less than 20 years	8	10	
21-40	10	31	
41-60	1	17	
61 and above	2	11	
Marital status			12.563***
Single	13	15	
Married	7	41	
Widowed	1	10	
Divorced	0	3	
Number of children			14.152***
None	13	14	
1 – 3	3	26	
4 – 6	5	24	
7 – 9	0	4	
10 and above	0	1	
Number of children in the city			5.685
None	15	31	
1 – 2	3	24	
3 – 4	3	10	
5-6	0	3	
7and above	0	1	

\*\*\*=1% level of significance, \*\*=5% level of significance

\*Source: Author's estimation from participants' response

the rural folks (76.7%) preferred local chicken meat to imported ones on the grounds of quality (safety), taste, patriotism, and tenderness of chicken meat. This finding here is similar to a study by Kyarisiima, Naggujja, Magala, Kwizera, Kugonza, and Bonabana-Wabbi, (2011) in rural Uganda as well as Jayaraman, Munira, Chowdhury, and Iranmanesh, (2013) study in Malaysia. If the participants used safety as measure of quality, then their preference for local chicken defies the popular notion raised by Ogunnaiké (2010) that local products are substandard compared to imported ones.

Many of the respondents believed that imported chicken meat unlike local ones contained chemicals that are detrimental to the health of consumers and as such

**Table 6: Chi Square Test for Participants' Background and Chicken Preference Continued**

Variable	Imported chicken	Local chicken	Chi square value
Level of education			1.804
Primary	2	7	
JHS	7	29	
SHS/Vocational	9	18	
Training College	1	2	
University	1	2	
Employment status			1.957
Unemployed	7	13	
Employed	14	56	
Distance to the nearest Urban center			4.472
1-15km	3	27	
16-25km	9	21	
26-30km	9	21	
Income level			0.817
Below GH¢500	13	50	
GH¢501-1000	1	5	

\*Source: Author's estimation from participants' response

would prefer to choose local chicken over imported ones. Literature on consumer preference in developed and developing countries according to Quartey and Abor (2011) say that patriotism plays important role in the demand for local goods in developed countries compared to developing countries. Thus consumers in the former countries would choose goods from their home countries above others while consumers in developing country would prefer western products to locally manufactured ones. The findings here may therefore give some exceptions to this knowledge in the literature since patriotism is among the topmost reasons why rural Ghanaians prefer local chicken to imported ones.

Because there has been recent argument from some quarters for the government of Ghana to place a ban on chicken meat importation, the views of participants were sought and majority said they would support that idea. Their readiness to embrace such a policy were based on the fact that ban of importation of chicken meat would help promote local poultry business. Again they believed that imported chicken meats are not nutritious, and lastly they noted some are harmful to consume because they contain harmful chemicals. Of course one sees clearly that the rural folks have some concern about their

health, the development of local business and nutrition when consuming chicken meat. They also share with some of the economic arguments for international trade restrictions.

A chi square test showed that factors like income, educational level, employment status and distance to the nearest urban town have no relationship with the preference for chicken meat. The insignificant effect of income compares unfavorably with Akpinar (2012) and Amitha (1998); insignificant effect of educational background contradicts Jekanowski, Williams II and Schick, (2010) and insignificant employment status also contradicts Akpinar (2012) in their study on consumer preference for other local and imported goods. The significant variables affecting preference for local chicken meat were age, marital status, and number of children. According to Kotler (2003) elder people are more likely to prefer local goods to imported ones due to their conservative nature and the finding here supports that. Akpinar (2012) also had a significant effect between age and marital status.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The outcome of this research offers three contributions to academia worth mentioning. Firstly, it reveals that not all goods/ products that are imported into a developing country may command high preference over local ones by the citizens. Secondly, it deepens our understanding on studies concerning COO as this focuses on rural folks and chicken meat which is departure of the various studies that have used mainly urban participants and durable products, and lastly we get to know that rural folks also have their criteria in choosing between imported food items and locally made ones. The recommendations of the study are that:

- (a) Further studies on COO effect need to involve rural folks.
- (b) Since the rural dwellers in the study have high preference for locally reared chicken to imported ones, local producers of chicken can find ways of exploiting the market there.
- (c) There is the need for Ghana's Food and Drugs Authority to do a thorough check on the chicken meat that are imported into the country to ensure their safety for human consumption.

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