

**CONSUMER PERCEPTION OF THE HEALTH BENEFITS OF AVOCADO AND A SENSORY
EVALUATION OF CONSUMER ACCEPTANCE OF AN AVOCADO FLAVOURED ICE-
CREAM.**

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Background: Principally it is important that the public know the nutritional value of avocado, particularly its fat content and its role in human health and wellbeing and its nutrient and mineral contents which also facilitate a healthy status. Avocadoes scientifically termed *Persea gratissima* Gaertn is a fruit of an evergreen tree of the botanical family Lauraceae that grows to a height of approximately 16meters (Rodger, 2004).

Objective: The aims of this study were an evaluation of consumer perception of the health benefits of avocado and a sensory evaluation of consumer acceptance of an avocado flavoured ice-cream.

Method: Respondents were selected based on their availability, willingness to participate and being avocado consumers. Data was collected using questionnaires and was analyzed using the SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) program where analyses were done using frequency, descriptive statistics, Pearson's Chi-square, T-test, percentages and cross tabulation.

Results: Though 91% of the participants perceived avocado has health benefits, their general perception of avocado was largely deficient in areas such as its cholesterol content, ability to improve insulin sensitivity, and its role in blood pressure regulation and it being a fattening food when in fact they are incorrect. Similarly, the knowledge level of participants was deficient as most responded in the 'Not Sure' category which ranged from 21.6% to 73.4%. Participants' main reason for avocado consumption was taste while it is greatly used as a side or filling.

Conclusion: Worthy to note in this study low frequencies were observed in knowledge and perception among participants. However, they are now knowledgeable of some of the nutrient

contents and health benefits associated with avocado as they were debriefed upon completion of the survey. Health benefits, good source of fat, insulin sensitivity and potassium levels have been found to be correlated to avocado use. Whilst Avocado ice-cream is highly accepted as 92% of the consumers evaluated liked both the dairy and soy form. Sixty-eight percent of the participants evaluated viewed avocado as being of importance to nutrition a ranked scale.