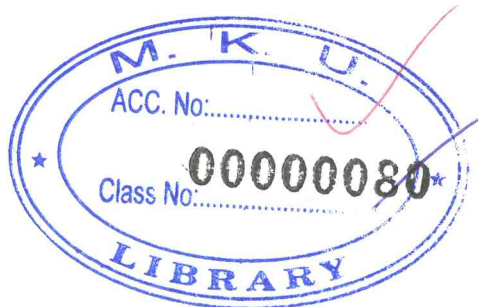


AN ASSESSMENT OF THE VALUE ADDITION ON BANANAS IN KENYA TO COME UP WITH STRATEGIES TO BENEFIT PRODUCERS AND SATISFY CONSUMERS: A CASE OF MERU CENTRAL DISTRICT

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MKU80/13
SB379 .I73 2013

A Research Project Submitted in Partial Fulfillment for the Degree of Master of Business Administration of Mount Kenya University

OCTOBER 2013

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to assess the value addition on bananas in Meru Central District (MCD) of Kenya in order to come up with strategies that would benefit banana chain actors and satisfy varied consumer needs. The study was guided by the following specific objectives: to establish the value addition on bananas in MCD, to find out effective strategies to improve value addition on bananas in MCD, to identify various types of value added banana products that can be made in MCD to satisfy consumer needs. This study was based on the Value Chain Theory (VCT) of the firm (Porter, 1985). The study was limited in scope to value addition on bananas in MCD. The target population was 300 farmers, 165 dealers and 5 government officials. The sample size for this study was 70. Relevant government ministries that offer services to the banana sector were included in the study. The study adopted a descriptive research design with questionnaire and interview guide to collect the required data. The research questionnaires were piloted on a sample of 5 respondents that included 3 farmers and 2 dealers who were not included in the final study. Purposive sampling was applied to sample relevant government officers. Data collected was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics which enabled inferences to be drawn. The results of data analysis were reported in summary form using frequency tables, bar graphs, and pie charts. Frequency counts, percentages mean and standard deviation were used to analyze quantitative data. Qualitative data was analyzed by arranging the responses thematically. The study established that the only form of value addition on bananas in Meru Central District is selling the banana in its raw form to the final consumer. Modern methods of processing bananas are limited and the diversification of banana products is lacking. Instead, traditional methods are mostly adopted in the ripening and preservation of bananas within the district. Moreover, the only product from bananas is the fruit itself when ripe or can be consumed as food when raw. Virtually no other means of transforming bananas into secondary products exist in the district despite the bulk production of the fruit. The study also established that bananas can be processed into various products like biscuits, sweets, wine, juice, crisps, cakes, jam, beer, sauce, yoghurt, etc, that are more palatable to varied consumer tastes. It can also be concluded that banana is an important horticultural crop in terms of its present and potential contribution to food and nutritional security and income enhancement of small landholders and therefore needs to be given all the emphasis it deserves. The study recommends that: bananas should be processed into various products to earn more income for the producers and satisfy different tastes of consumers who do not like raw bananas; farmers should be organized into growers associations to improve their bargaining power through capacity building; establishment of factories to process bananas into various products; improvement of infrastructure to ease transportation of bananas; provision of affordable credit facilities to empower the chain actors in the banana agribusiness; enactment of laws to ensure that all flour sold to consumers is fortified with banana flour; further scientific research on controlling of banana ripening process to reduce post harvest losses government should ensure that there is no exportation of raw bananas but instead processed products are exported to earn maximum returns.