

Plant-Based Meat Alternatives in South Africa: An Analysis of Products on Supermarket Shelves

Nishanie Moonaisur, Riette de Kock, Nandene Marx-Pienaar

University of Pretoria, Pretoria, South Africa

Abstract

All over the world, the development of products that resemble meat products but contain predominantly plant-sourced ingredients, is a prime focus. Meat obtained by rearing animals is associated with a range of important issues related to the sustainability of the planet. Locally, the topic is hot and the cause of various debates among industry role players. This study aimed to explore and analyze plant-based meat alternative (PBMA) products in the South African retail market as well as review internal (nutritional content and ingredients) and external (country of origin, cost/kg, and label claims) factors of the products. This study also compared the nutritional content of PBMA and comparative meat products. Seventy-eight PBMA products were included: plant-based sausages (n=23), burgers (n=31), chicken-style (n=11), mince (n=8) and an “other” (n= 5) category providing for a variety of product lines. Information from product packaging (total fat, saturated fat, fiber, protein, sugar, sodium, carbohydrates, and energy density) was extracted for all PBMA (n=78) and comparative meat product lines (n=33). Meat products tended to be comparatively higher in total fat and saturated fat, whilst PBMA were higher in carbohydrate, sugar, and dietary fibre content. Sodium content of plant-based mince was approximately five times higher than beef mince. On-pack claims for PBMA included vegetarian/vegan/plant-based (80% of products), high in/source of protein (48%), contains no genetically modified organisms (GMOs) (16%), and gluten free (26%). The plant protein trend has prompted innovation in PBMA, however wide nutrient ranges and higher sodium levels highlights the importance of nutrition guidelines for their development to ensure healthier product offerings to consumers. The findings of this study may assist in exploration of consumers preferences/attitudes or engagement with PBMA products, which could, in turn, guide new product development within the category. However, information about possible barriers, drivers, consumer expectations and attitudes towards these products is required.

PRESENTER BIOGRAPHY: NISHANIE MOONAI SUR

Nishanie is a PhD student who is currently employed at Cadbury South Africa as a Chocolate Project Commercialization manager.