

ANALYSING THE EFFECTS OF MARKETING STRATEGIES ON THE ADOPTION OF LOCAL FOOD SECURITY INITIATIVES

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Abstract

Introduction. Local food security initiatives are vital for sustainable nourishment in vulnerable Nigerian communities. However, their uptake often depends on effective marketing. This study examines how community-based, culturally tailored, and digital marketing strategies influence consumer adoption of local food security initiatives in three Local Government Areas (LGAs) of Kwara State, Nigeria.

Materials and methods. A qualitative approach was used, involving semi-structured interviews ($n = 30$) with farmers, consumers, coop leaders, and local officials, along with two focus group discussions. Thematic analysis identified key themes related to marketing strategies and adoption patterns.

Results. Three main strategies emerged as effective: (1) cultural alignment of marketing messages, resonating with traditional values; (2) grassroots campaigns via community radio, market announcements, and visual storytelling were shown to increase awareness and trust; and (3) cooperative marketing, which strengthened credibility between producers and consumers. Significant barriers included economic limitations and low digital literacy among target populations.

Conclusions. An integrated marketing model combining traditional outreach with digital platforms and culturally resonant messaging is recommended to enhance local food initiative adoption. Strengthened cooperative structures and digital capacitybuilding are essential for sustainable impact. Future research should evaluate digital innovation and cooperative marketing models in broader contexts.

Keywords: food security, marketing strategies, local initiatives, consumer behaviour, adoption rates, local food systems

INTRODUCTION

Background on local food security initiatives

Local food security initiatives focus on enhancing the production, accessibility, and utilisation of food within specific regions, thus aiming to ensure that all community members have reliable access to sufficient nutritious food. Local food security refers to the consistent availability, accessibility, and utilisation of adequate, safe, and nutritious food produced and distributed within a specific geographical region to meet the dietary needs and preferences of its population (García-Díez et al., 2021; Sari et al., 2024). Unlike general food security, which may rely on national or global supply chains, local food security emphasises the resilience and sustainability of community-level food systems (McDaniel et al., 2021). It is particularly crucial in rural and vulnerable areas, where reliance on external food sources is limited or unstable. Ensuring local food security supports livelihoods, enhances nutritional health, and strengthens community autonomy. For the broader society, it reduces dependency on imports, supports local economies, promotes environmental sustainability, and ensures food system stability in times of global disruptions. Therefore, improving the adoption of local food initiatives is essential for achieving long-term food security, both at the household level and for national development (Sari et al., 2024).

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Food security is often misunderstood as merely ensuring food availability (Barichello, 2021). However, it also encompasses food accessibility, utilisation (quality and nutritional value), and stability over time (García-Díez et al., 2021). In many communities, the problem is not only the lack of food but also its poor quality, lack of variety, or cultural mismatch of available food options. Thus, food insecurity can exist even when food is present, if it is not affordable, nutritionally adequate, or culturally acceptable (Sumsion et al., 2023). This study understands food security as both the need for sufficient food and the need for appropriate quality, particularly in the context of local food systems. Marketing strategies become essential tools for addressing these gaps by making nutritious, locally produced food more visible, trusted, and accessible to consumers.

These initiatives are crucial, particularly in the current context of rising global food prices, climate change, and increasing food insecurity in various demographics. They often operate through cooperative models, which promote interdependence among local farmers and consumers and strengthen the local economy (Horlick and Chatwood, 2023; Brinkley et al., 2021). Significantly, local food systems can bolster resilience against global market fluctuations, thus prioritising community needs over external competition (Paudel et al., 2023; Cele and Mudhara, 2022). Moreover, these initiatives frequently incorporate ecological sustainability, promoting practices that preserve local biodiversity and enhance food system sustainability (Paudel et al., 2023; Jumabayeva et al., 2023; Brinkley et al., 2021).

The role of agricultural localities in fostering food security is vital, particularly as food systems become increasingly interconnected and complex. Local food initiatives contribute not only to economic stability but also to social cohesion, as they create networks that support local farmers through direct sales channels to consumers (Brinkley et al., 2021; Cele and Mudhara, 2022). Such systems have been shown to improve food diversity and quality within communities by prioritising local production, thereby enhancing dietary adequacy and strengthening food sovereignty (Ahmed et al., 2017; Rahmanto et al., 2020). Through these systems, consumers can also establish a closer connection with their food sources, which is increasingly correlated with healthy eating (Sallau, 2021; Feenstra and Hardesty, 2016).

Marketing plays a critical role in the adoption and proliferation of local food security initiatives. Effective

marketing strategies can boost awareness of the importance of local food systems and influence consumer purchasing behaviour towards locally sourced products (Feenstra and Hardesty, 2016). By promoting the unique benefits of local food, such as freshness, flavour and environmental sustainability, marketers can strengthen consumer motivation to support local agriculture (Cele and Mudhara, 2022). For instance, values-based supply chains emphasise the ethical dimensions of food choices, nurturing consumer trust and loyalty towards local producers (Feenstra and Hardesty, 2016).

Moreover, the accessibility and availability of information regarding local food products are significantly affected by marketing efforts. This includes leveraging social media and community events to communicate the benefits of local agriculture, a strategy increasingly adopted in various regions (Kvasha et al., 2024; Kushitor et al., 2022). Marketing efforts also help improve market access for smallholders by providing them with resources to participate effectively in local food systems, thus enhancing their economic viability (Manda et al., 2020; Bonuedi et al., 2021). Additionally, food banks and co-operatives are uniquely positioned to mobilise marketing efforts that connect local producers with consumers, bolstering community engagement in local food initiatives (Brinkley et al., 2021; Cele and Mudhara, 2022).

Research indicates that direct marketing strategies such as farmers markets and community-supported agriculture (CSA) have shown promise in bridging the gap between producer and consumer, enhancing both food security and community relationships (Adams and Salois, 2010; Jumabayeva et al., 2023). These models benefit consumers and empower farmers by providing them with more control over pricing and distribution, aligning their sales with local market demands (Headey et al., 2019). Therefore, developing effective marketing strategies is essential for promoting the adoption of local food security initiatives and ensuring their sustainability.

Research gap and study significance

Despite the growing body of research surrounding local food systems, gaps remain in understanding the specific marketing strategies that significantly influence the adoption of these initiatives. Many studies focus on either production aspects or consumer behaviour separately, with limited integration of marketing perspectives that connect the two (Rahmanto et al., 2020; Omotesho et al., 2014; Yudhatama et al., 2021). There is a need for

comprehensive analyses that explore how strategic marketing can not only enhance consumer awareness but also transform local agricultural practices to better serve community needs.

Additionally, understanding the cultural and socio-economic factors that affect consumer decision-making regarding local food products is crucial. While numerous local food security initiatives exist across Nigeria, many struggle to gain traction due to limited community awareness, weak consumer engagement, and inadequate promotional strategies. In this context, *success* refers to the ability of marketing strategies to increase awareness, trust, and participation in local food programmes, thereby leading to greater adoption and sustainability (Paudel et al., 2023; Brinkley et al., 2021). This research is important because it addresses a practical problem: many well-structured programmes do not reach the people who need them most, or fail to inspire action due to ineffective communication. The study's findings will be relevant not only to consumers and local farmers, but also to policy makers, cooperatives, NGOs, and food security practitioners, who can use the insights to design better outreach strategies tailored to cultural and socio-economic realities.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND OBJECTIVES

This study was guided by research questions developed at the outset, informed by existing literature on local food systems, marketing strategy, and food security challenges in sub-Saharan Africa. These questions were further shaped by the specific socioeconomic and cultural context of Kwara State, Nigeria. They served as the foundation for designing the interview and focus group guides and structured both the data collection and thematic analysis processes. The objectives of this study are to identify and analyse the marketing strategies that have been most successful (effective in increasing awareness, trust, and participation in local food security initiatives) in promoting local food security initiatives, particularly among consumers and smallholder farmers. To achieve this, the following research questions will be posed:

1. What specific marketing strategies have proven effective in fostering consumer engagement with local food initiatives and why?
2. How do cultural perceptions of local food impact consumer behaviour towards these initiatives?

3. In what ways can marketing strategies be adapted to enhance the effectiveness and reach of local food security initiatives within diverse communities?
4. What role do cooperative marketing efforts play in bridging gaps between producers and consumers in local food systems?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical perspectives on food security and marketing strategies

Food security has emerged as a multi-faceted issue, encompassing various dimensions, including availability, access, utilisation, and stability of food. This definition integrates these dimensions to encompass the social, economic, and environmental contexts in which food systems operate (Godrich et al., 2020). One prominent theoretical framework is the food regime theory, which analyses how global food systems interact with local contexts and influence food security outcomes (Lawrence, 2017). This theory highlights how food insecurity is increasingly a manifestation of globalisation, drawing attention to the changing dynamics in how food is produced, distributed, and consumed globally, thereby impacting local food security conditions. The Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC) approach, which emphasises consistent messaging across channels, can enhance the adoption of local food initiatives by shaping consumer perceptions (Little et al., 2024). When aligned with local narratives and social media, IMC helps promote the ecological and nutritional benefits of local products, fostering both sustainability and community engagement (O'Brien et al., 2016).

Studies on consumer behaviour and adoption of local initiatives

Consumer behaviour towards local food initiatives is influenced by various psychological and socioeconomic factors, including knowledge, perception, and availability of local foods. Research indicates that health consciousness and environmental awareness are significant motivators for consumers choosing local foods, which can be leveraged through targeted marketing strategies (Tilaye et al., 2023). In the context of consumer adoption, the theory of planned behaviour (TPB) posits that individual attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control play critical roles in determining food purchasing behaviours (Méthot and Bennett, 2018).

Marketing campaigns that use relatable narratives and community endorsements can effectively shift consumer attitudes towards local foods and enhance perceived behavioural control by simplifying the purchasing process. This theory underscores the potential for marketing to not only inform but also persuade consumers to align their choices with local food initiatives.

Furthermore, studies have revealed significant correlations between food literacy, defined as an individual's capacity to obtain, process and understand nutrition information, and the likelihood of supporting local food systems (Musyoka, 2025). Educational marketing campaigns focused on enhancing food literacy and awareness of the benefits of supporting local agriculture can significantly drive consumer engagement and foster loyalty to local food initiatives.

Challenges in marketing local food security programmes

While marketing is vital for promoting local food security initiatives, several persistent challenges undermine its effectiveness. A key issue is the lack of consistent messaging, which often creates confusion about the benefits of local versus conventional foods (Godrich et al., 2017). To build consumer trust and encourage adoption, marketing strategies must clearly communicate the unique value propositions of local food systems. Socioeconomic disparities further complicate marketing efforts. In many areas, low-income households tend to prioritise affordability over quality, opting for cheaper, mass-produced foods (Anser et al., 2021). To counter this, local food programmes must adopt equitable pricing models and emphasise the long-term economic benefits of buying local, such as community support and farmer empowerment.

Another major obstacle is competition from large corporations with greater marketing budgets and wider distribution networks, making it difficult for small-scale producers to become visible (Godrich et al., 2020). Collaborative approaches such as cooperative marketing can help local producers pool resources and launch more impactful campaigns. Technological barriers also limit marketing reach. Many small producers lack access to digital tools or the skills to use them effectively, hindering their ability to engage with consumers online (Webb et al., 2016). Addressing this gap through training and capacity building in digital marketing can improve visibility and consumer interaction. Cultural preferences and resistance to dietary change remain

critical hurdles. Despite growing interest in local food, shifting long-established purchasing behaviours is difficult (Ssekate, 2024). Engaging storytelling and culturally relevant messaging can help overcome these barriers by fostering emotional connections and promoting healthier, community-based choices.

METHODOLOGY

Research design

This study adopted a descriptive qualitative research design to examine the influence of marketing strategies on the adoption of local food security initiatives. A qualitative approach was deemed appropriate for capturing the rich, contextual experiences of stakeholders, including farmers, consumers, and policymakers. The study adhered to the Consolidated Criteria for Reporting Qualitative Research (COREQ) to ensure methodological transparency and rigour.

Type of qualitative study

A thematic content analysis was employed to identify and interpret recurring patterns in participant responses. This method facilitated a comprehensive understanding of stakeholder perspectives on the accessibility, effectiveness, and impact of marketing strategies within local food systems.

Population and sampling

The study population comprised:

- Smallholder farmers engaged in local food security programmes,
- Consumers in rural and urban communities,
- Agricultural extension officers and policymakers, and
- Marketing professionals involved in promoting local food initiatives.

A purposive sampling strategy was initially used to identify individuals with direct involvement in or exposure to food security initiatives. Snowball sampling was subsequently employed to recruit additional participants with specialised knowledge or unique experiences. The selection process ensured diversity across demographic factors such as gender, geographical location, and economic background.

A total of 30 semi-structured interviews were conducted: 12 with smallholder farmers, 8 with consumers,

6 with cooperative leaders, and 4 with local government or extension officers. In addition, two focus group discussions (FGDs) were held, each comprising 6 to 8 participants representing a mix of consumer and producer perspectives. Participants were selected from three Local Government Areas (LGAs) in Kwara State, Nigeria: Asa, Baruten, and Ekiti-Kwara.

The research questions were developed before data collection, informed by existing literature and preliminary field consultations, and guided the design of interview and FGD protocols.

Inclusion criteria required participants to:

1. Be actively involved in or exposed to local food security initiatives,
2. Have experience with marketing strategies related to local food systems,
3. Provide informed consent
4. Be proficient in English or a local language for effective communication.

Participants were further classified based on their level of engagement with marketing strategies:

- **High engagement** – Actively involved in designing or implementing marketing efforts.
- **Moderate engagement** – Intermittent interaction with marketing initiatives.
- **Low engagement** – Minimal awareness or reliance on informal promotion channels.

SETTING AND DATA COLLECTION

Interview guide and procedure

The study was conducted across three local government areas in Kwara State, Nigeria: Asa, Baruten, and Ekiti (Kwara). These areas were selected due to their active involvement in local food security initiatives and their demographic and cultural diversity. Data collection took place between October 2nd and November 8th, 2024, encompassing both rural and urban communities within the selected regions. Semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions were conducted at local farms, community centres, and cooperative venues. Interviews lasted 45 to 60 minutes and were audio-recorded with participant consent. Field notes were also maintained to capture contextual insights and non-verbal cues. Data collection continued until thematic saturation was achieved.

An interview guide was developed in line with the study's objectives. Key discussion areas included:

- Awareness and understanding of marketing strategies,
- Perceptions of message credibility and appeal,
- Cultural relevance of marketing approaches,
- Challenges in adopting promoted practices, and
- The role of cooperative and community-led campaigns.

The guide allowed for flexibility to probe deeper into participant experiences and adapt to emerging themes.

Data analysis

Interviews were transcribed verbatim and analysed using thematic analysis. Initial codes were generated inductively, followed by categorisation into overarching themes aligned with the research objectives. A second researcher independently coded a subset of transcripts to enhance inter-coder reliability. Any discrepancies were resolved through discussion. Themes, Categories, Subcategories, and Codes. Thematic analysis yielded key insights related to:

- 1) Localised Marketing and Cultural Resonance
- 2) Trust and Message Credibility,
- 3) Access to Marketing Channels (e.g., digital media, events),
- 4) Adoption Barriers (economic constraints, technological access), and
- 5) Impact of Collaborative Marketing on consumer-producer linkages.

Thematic analysis was used to identify five major themes, which are presented in the Results section.

Ethical considerations

Ethical approval was obtained prior to data collection. Written informed consent was secured from all participants. To protect anonymity, identifying information was removed from all transcripts. Participation was entirely voluntary, with participants free to withdraw at any stage. All data including audio recordings and field notes were stored in password-protected digital files accessible only to the research team.

RESULTS

The findings from this study on the effects of marketing strategies on the adoption of local food security initiatives in the Asa, Baruten, and Ekiti Local Government

Table 1. Themes, categories, subcategories, and codes

Theme	Category	Subcategory	Codes
Localized marketing and cultural resonance	Visibility & access	Media channels	Radio, social media, flyers, market events
	Message appeal	Content relevance	Health messaging, traditional pride, local dishes
	Cultural fit	Identity and food habits	Familiar ingredients, seasonal relevance, family recipes
Trust and credibility	Information sources	Source reliability	Community leaders, peer influence, NGO/government backing
	Transparency	Authenticity	Certification, traceability, testimonials
Accessibility of marketing platforms	Digital inclusion	Tech access	Smartphone use, internet access, literacy levels
	Community channels	Local communication	Word of mouth, cooperative announcements, religious leaders
Adoption barriers	Economic constraints	Affordability	Pricing concerns, cost-benefit views, subsidy awareness
	Structural limitations	Infrastructure gaps	Poor roads, storage issues, market access
Cooperative and community-led strategies	Collaborative marketing	Group engagement	Shared branding, group events, cooperative trust
	Local innovation	Adapted messaging	Storytelling, local champions, festival markets

Source: own elaboration.

Areas (LGAs) of Kwara State, Nigeria, reveal meaningful insights into the ways marketing influences consumer behaviour, farmer participation, and programme sustainability. Semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions with stakeholders identified four major research questions that guided the thematic analysis. The table below presents the themes, categories, subcategories, and codes used in data analysis:

Research question 1.
What specific marketing strategies have proven effective in fostering consumer engagement with local food initiatives and why?

The data revealed that locally grounded marketing strategies such as community announcements, radio advertisements, and in-person sensitization campaigns were most effective in encouraging consumer participation. Approximately 80% of participants highlighted how exposure to information via familiar platforms was critical to changing their behaviour. In Asa LGA, a female consumer noted, “I first heard about the local food day on

the radio. They mentioned fresh vegetables from nearby farms, and I went to see for myself. Now I buy there regularly”. Similarly, in Ekiti LGA, a male cooperative leader stated, “We used drama and market jingles to spread awareness. People laughed and remembered the message”.

In Baruten LGA, flyers and posters with local dialects had a noticeable impact. “The poster was in our own language, so everyone could understand”, said Participant 12. Younger consumers responded well to social media, particularly Facebook and WhatsApp, where farmers shared photos and prices. Participant 18 explained, “When I saw the yams on Facebook, I contacted the seller directly. It felt personal”. Despite the effectiveness of these efforts, some stakeholders expressed concern over inconsistent funding and limited reach. “We do our best with what we have, but we can’t afford to keep the radio ads running all month”, noted a campaign manager in Baruten. Overall, grassroots and culturally aligned strategies were shown to yield significant consumer engagement when consistently applied.

Research question 2.

How do cultural perceptions of local food impact consumer behaviour towards these initiatives?

Cultural perceptions played a pivotal role in shaping attitudes and adoption patterns. Participants frequently mentioned the alignment of local food initiatives with traditional dietary values and community identity. In Ekiti LGA, one participant remarked, “We are used to eating what our mothers grew. These local programmes just reminded us of our roots”. Another consumer added, “My grandmother used to cook with these same vegetables. Buying them again feels right”. In contrast, some respondents still viewed imported or processed foods as superior, indicating a residual perception shaped by advertising and convenience. Participant 27 observed, “People think rice in a package is better than fresh maize, just because it looks fancy”.

Farmers acknowledged this divide and made efforts to reframe local food as premium and healthy. A cooperative head in Asa LGA explained, “We told people: our food is not poor man’s food. It’s fresher and safer. That message helped”. Social events and tasting booths were used to rebuild positive cultural connections. “Once they taste our okra soup and see it’s just like home cooking, they come back”, said Participant 14. These findings emphasise the importance of aligning marketing messages with cultural pride and identity. Tailored communication that evokes nostalgia, health consciousness, and community support appears most effective in transforming perceptions and enhancing consumer loyalty.

Research question 3.

In what ways can marketing strategies be adapted to enhance the effectiveness and reach of local food security initiatives within diverse communities?

Adapting marketing strategies to suit local contexts was a recurring recommendation from stakeholders. Many emphasised that one-size-fits-all messaging often fails due to linguistic, technological, and socioeconomic differences across LGAs. Participant 22 noted, “In Ekiti, young people are online. In Baruten, they’re not. You need different plans for each”. In rural communities, radio announcements and direct engagement at markets proved most impactful. Participant 11 shared, “They came to our market day, explained things with megaphones, and gave out leaflets. That’s how people listen here”. Meanwhile,

in more connected areas like parts of Asa, digital campaigns had better traction. “We created voice notes in Yoruba and shared them via WhatsApp. People forwarded them like wildfire”, said a youth farmer.

To improve inclusiveness, participants proposed collaborative efforts with religious leaders, schools, and traditional rulers. “The village chief announced the programme after prayers, and that brought more respect”, stated Participant 7. Another recommended strategy was mobile exhibitions. “Taking samples to schools and churches helped us reach women and youth directly”, said Participant 16. In addition, adapting visuals and language to match local dialects and literacy levels was seen as essential. “Posters must show real faces from the community. That’s how trust is built”, one participant emphasised. Flexibility, cultural adaptation, and community partnerships were key factors in improving campaign penetration and effectiveness.

Research question 4.

What role do cooperative marketing efforts play in bridging gaps between producers and consumers in local food systems?

Cooperative marketing emerged as a critical mechanism for connecting local producers with broader consumer bases. Farmers in all three LGAs reported that cooperatives provided a platform to pool resources, standardise messaging, and negotiate better market terms. Participant 20 shared, “As individuals, we can’t reach many people. But when we come together, we make posters, plan events, and speak with one voice”. Consumer trust also increased when messaging came from cooperatives. A participant in Ekiti LGA remarked, “I trust the farmer group more than just a lone seller. They explain where the food comes from”. Cooperatives organised community food fairs, distributed branded packaging, and arranged bulk discounts that drew more consumers. “We introduced ‘buy local’ discount days. People came in large numbers”, said Participant 17.

Barriers such as funding and coordination still existed. “It’s hard to manage everyone’s opinion. But once we agreed on a message, things moved faster”, explained a cooperative leader in Asa. Some farmers lacked digital access, so cooperatives also helped manage online presence. “They handle our Facebook page and respond to messages for us”, said Participant 13. Cooperative marketing efforts helped bridge information gaps, reduced transaction costs, and increased visibility for local

food products. The collaborative approach empowered smallholders and built community ownership, making local food systems more resilient and accessible.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Although some of the findings align with existing research on consumer behaviour and community-based food systems, this study adds value by situating these insights in a real-world Nigerian context. For example, while previous studies have noted the importance of culturally resonant messaging (Méthot and Bennett, 2018; Tilaye et al., 2023), this research demonstrates how local dialects, storytelling, and community figures specifically influence engagement across three LGAs. Similarly, cooperative marketing is not a new concept, but its role in supporting digital outreach and group branding in low-resource settings is rarely documented in such depth. By linking known marketing principles to the lived experiences of rural farmers and consumers, the study extends the applicability of these strategies to similar underserved regions.

Theme 1. Localised Marketing and Cultural Resonance

The success of marketing strategies in promoting local food security initiatives was strongly influenced by how well they resonated with local cultural values, media habits, and community identity. Participants across all three LGAs emphasised that visibility through familiar channels such as community radio, market announcements, and posters in local languages played a major role in increasing awareness and engagement. A consumer in Baruten LGA noted, “I first heard about it on the radio. The announcer spoke our language, so I paid attention”. Similarly, another participant in Asa remarked, “They reminded us that our local vegetables are healthier and taste better than the ones from far away. It made me proud to buy local”.

This connection between marketing effectiveness and cultural relevance aligns with the findings of Feenstra and Hardesty (2016), who highlight the role of values-based and place-based marketing in strengthening sustainable food systems. Marketing messages that referenced traditional foods, communal values, and local pride were perceived as more authentic and trustworthy, encouraging consumers to support local produce. In particular, campaigns that invoked memories

of home-cooked meals, traditional ingredients, or respected community elders helped create emotional ties between consumers and the products being promoted.

Social media platforms such as WhatsApp and Facebook were especially useful in semi-urban areas, allowing farmers and cooperatives to share real-time updates, harvest photos, and promotional messages. As one farmer shared, “We posted harvest pictures on WhatsApp, and people message us to order”. These digital strategies complemented traditional methods, but their reach was often limited by funding constraints and inconsistent campaign duration—an issue also noted by Godrich et al. (2020), who stressed the importance of sustained communication in food security outreach. Despite the strong emotional appeal of localised marketing, some barriers remained. A group of participants continued to associate imported or packaged food with higher status or better quality, often due to polished branding and wider availability. “People think foreign rice is better because of the packaging”, one respondent observed. To counter this perception, many initiatives incorporated storytelling, food fairs, and peer testimonials to rebuild confidence in local food options. These approaches reflect the findings of Méthot & Bennett (2018), Tilaye et al. (2023), and Brinkley et al. (2021), who argue that culturally resonant marketing can shift consumer narratives and improve adoption outcomes.

Theme 2. Trust and credibility

The credibility of marketing messages and their sources emerged as a central theme in influencing adoption. Participants showed a clear preference for information coming from trusted local institutions, cooperatives, and known individuals. One consumer shared, “If it comes from our community leader or church, I believe it more than when I see a flyer”. The findings echo the research of Cele & Mudhara (2022), which highlights the importance of trust and legitimacy in local market participation. Digital platforms were occasionally viewed with suspicion, particularly when information was inconsistent or unverifiable. Participant 15 remarked, “Sometimes people promise fresh produce on WhatsApp, but what they bring is different”. The study also identified the role of transparency in messaging. Farmers who could trace their produce and show authenticity gained more consumer loyalty. This finding is consistent with Jumabayeva et al. (2023), who emphasise transparency and traceability as drivers of trust in local food systems.

Thus, for marketing to be effective, it must be accompanied by credible messengers, reliable platforms, and verifiable content.

Theme 3. Accessibility of marketing platforms

Access to marketing platforms both digital and traditional was a critical determinant of outreach success. In rural parts of Baruten and Ekiti LGAs, limited internet connectivity and digital illiteracy restricted the use of social media. A farmer commented, “I don’t use Facebook. I don’t even have a smartphone. But I hear about the programmes from the radio or my son”. In contrast, urban and semi-urban areas had higher digital uptake. Here, cooperative WhatsApp groups and Facebook posts allowed for real-time updates and consumer engagement. This digital divide was also noted by Webb et al. (2016), who emphasise the need for inclusive communication strategies in rural agricultural communities. Participant 23 explained, “Our cooperative shares voice notes in Yoruba. Everyone can understand and forward it”. To improve access, some groups combined traditional communication with digital strategies. This hybrid approach mirrors recommendations by Godrich et al. (2020), calling for integrated marketing communications to enhance participation in food security programmes. Enhancing local capacity to engage with both types of platforms will be essential to reach diverse demographics effectively.

Theme 4. Adoption barriers

Despite strong promotional efforts, several systemic barriers hindered the adoption of local food initiatives. Chief among them were affordability concerns, poor digital literacy, and infrastructural deficits. Participants reported that even when they understood the benefits, they sometimes couldn’t afford local food due to pricing or couldn’t access digital campaigns. Participant 7 stated, “I want to support local farmers, but their food is sometimes more expensive”. This reflects the work of Anser et al. (2021), who note that economic inequality can reduce engagement with sustainable food programmes. Similarly, lack of technological access and literacy limited adoption among older farmers. One participant said, “I hear about the app, but I don’t know how to use it. I just ask my children to check it”. Poor road infrastructure and inconsistent electricity also hindered consistent outreach and delivery of marketing content.

These barriers were consistent with the challenges outlined by Cele & Mudhara (2022), who highlight the importance of addressing structural issues alongside awareness campaigns. Without addressing these foundational barriers, even the best marketing strategies may not translate into sustained adoption.

Theme 5. Cooperative and community-led strategies

Cooperatives played a pivotal role in both marketing and implementation of local food security initiatives. Through joint campaigns, resource sharing, and collective branding, they were able to scale impact and reach wider audiences. Participant 18 noted, “Before we formed a group, we couldn’t afford posters or radio time. Together, we can do more”. This finding aligns with Feenstra & Hardesty (2016), who argue that values-based supply chains and collective efforts improve resilience and consumer loyalty. Farmers noted that cooperatives helped standardise prices, organise joint fairs, and handle digital outreach. “They manage our Facebook page and post market days. It’s easier that way”, said Participant 25.

Community-led strategies also enhanced credibility. In Ekiti LGA, consumers expressed greater trust in food sourced through known groups. “I know who farms it, and I know their family. That’s why I buy”, said one buyer. This mirrors Cele and Mudhara (2022), who emphasise the role of social capital and community trust in sustaining local food systems. Despite challenges in coordination and funding, cooperative-driven efforts showed the highest potential for sustainable impact. Their grassroots nature, local knowledge, and shared goals positioned them as key agents of change in bridging the gap between producers and consumers.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the role of marketing strategies in promoting local food security initiatives in Kwara State, Nigeria. It revealed that localised marketing approaches, such as community radio announcements, market-based promotions, and culturally resonant messaging, were highly effective in fostering consumer engagement. These strategies aligned with traditional food values and community identity, building trust and increasing adoption of locally sourced food. However, challenges such as digital illiteracy, economic constraints, and limited infrastructure

still posed barriers to wider adoption, particularly in rural areas. To enhance the effectiveness of marketing strategies, it is recommended that campaigns be tailored to local contexts, leveraging both traditional and digital platforms where appropriate. In addition, collaborative marketing efforts, particularly through cooperatives, should be strengthened to pool resources and enhance credibility. Future research should explore the long-term impact of these marketing strategies on food security and investigate the role of digital innovations in broadening outreach. Understanding how cultural, economic, and demographic factors influence consumer behaviour will further refine marketing efforts to boost the sustainability of local food security initiatives. Based on these findings, several practical steps are recommended, which can be taken by farmers, cooperatives, and policy makers.

RECOMMENDATION

For individual farmers

Farmers play a vital role in promoting local food systems, and a few practical steps can help them reach more consumers:

- **Use simple storytelling to connect with buyers** – Sharing short videos, photos, or voice notes through WhatsApp especially in local languages can help build trust and interest in fresh, locally grown produce.
- **Improve visibility with basic digital tools** – With minimal training, farmers can learn how to use smartphones and social media platforms to advertise seasonal harvests and stay in touch with customers.
- **Be open and clear about pricing** – Posting price lists or offering small discounts or bulk options (like farm bundles) can make food more accessible and appealing, especially for families.
- **Engage with feedback** – Taking note of what returning customers appreciate can help build a strong reputation and turn satisfied buyers into advocates within the community.

For farmer cooperatives

Cooperatives are well-positioned to coordinate and amplify the efforts of individual farmers. To strengthen their role:

- **Establish a shared identity** – Developing a name, logo, and slogan that reflect the cooperative's values

can foster recognition and help create unity across communities.

- **Pool marketing efforts and resources** – By working together, cooperatives can negotiate for better media rates, design materials in bulk, and maintain a consistent public presence.
- **Organise local market events** – Hosting group sales days, showcasing traditional recipes, or providing tasting sessions can attract attention and promote local food culture.
- **Support digital communication** – Tech-savvy members of the group can help manage cooperative social media pages and respond to buyers, while ensuring regular updates and strengthening consumer relationships.

For government institutions

Both local and state governments play a key role in supporting the success of local food initiatives. The following actions can help:

- **Offer small marketing grants** – Matching funds for community outreach such as radio jingles, posters, or social media ads can support cooperatives in expanding their reach.
- **Include marketing in extension services** – Agricultural training should also cover practical marketing skills like packaging, branding, and public engagement to help farmers promote their produce more effectively.
- **Prioritise local sourcing** – Giving preference to local producers in school feeding, health programmes and public catering creates steady markets and sends a strong message of support.
- **Improve basic infrastructure** – Better rural roads, stronger digital networks, and access to shared cold storage can help farmers reach markets more efficiently and deliver fresher products.
- **Simplify product certification** – Making it easier and more affordable for farmers to meet food safety standards can help them earn consumer trust and expand into formal retail spaces.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The themes identified in this study reflect patterns found in existing food security and marketing literature; their relevance lies in how they manifest within the unique cultural and socioeconomic context of rural and

semi-urban communities in Kwara State, Nigeria. The study does not claim to discover entirely new phenomena but aims to deepen the understanding of how known marketing approaches operate in local settings, particularly where infrastructure, tradition, and trust play critical roles in shaping food adoption behaviours.

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