Prevalence of malnutrition, especially under-nutrition, is high in Malawi. To overcome this problem, the Malawian Government is promoting dietary diversification by supporting production and consumption of underutilized yet nutritious foods such as peanuts. An important first step to promote increased consumption is to identify the needs and wants of the target consumers and then to develop products that address those specific requirements. Unfortunately, peanut consumption habits and the factors that influence peanut consumption in Malawi are not well known. To address this gap, a consumer survey was conducted to investigate the frequency of peanut consumption and preferred forms of peanut consumption in Malawi. Furthermore, factors that influence consumer decisions when choosing peanut products were evaluated.

Out of the 489 respondents surveyed, all but 3 consume peanuts, peanut products, or both. The three who do not eat peanuts and peanut products is due to allergies. A large portion (41%) consumes peanut, peanut products, or both at least three times in a week. The most frequently mentioned forms of peanut consumption in Malawi are roasted peanuts (65%), peanut flour (64%), and peanut butter (63%). However, the most preferred forms are peanut butter (33%), peanut flour (31%), and roasted peanuts (19%). All of these three products were considered to be very nutritious hence; having significant health benefits. Peanut flour preference was mainly due to its versatility since it can be used to season many other foods. The preference for roasted peanuts is primarily due to price and convenience because it is cheap and easy to prepare. Although peanut butter is the most preferred form due to its sensory appeal, its relatively high price hinders consumption.

Given that socioeconomic restrictions often override consumer preferences in Malawi, future peanut-based products’ innovations in Malawi should, therefore, explore ways to strike a balance between price and sensory appeal, health benefits, convenience, and versatility.