

Consumption Pattern and Consumer Preference for Different Rice Varieties in Selected Districts in Sri Lanka

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Rice production is one of the major production and staple foods in Sri Lanka. Hence, it is significantly taking to account in the cost of living measuring indexes. Consumer preference is concerned as a very important factor for product design and formulating pricing strategies. In the production process, farmers may select the type of paddy depending on seed availability and certain crop attributes such as pest and disease resistance, yield and convenience of harvesting. With regard to consumers, the factors affecting consumer preference and buying behavior is far beyond that. A number of rice varieties are available in the market with different attributes (color, raw, parboiled, grain size, local, imported). The Department of Census and Statistics has reported the per capita consumption of different rice varieties in different districts. However, the real reasons for such preference are not revealed. This study aims at filling that gap. The objective of this study is to examine the consumer buying behavior and preferences on different rice varieties and specific objectives are to identify the consumption pattern and buying behavior for different rice varieties and to identify the reasons for consumer preference for rice. This study was conducted in six districts; Gampaha, Colombo, Moneragala, Rathnapura, Matale and Jaffna with the six hundred consumers.

The survey results revealed that only age and the number of family members had a significant relationship with the frequency of purchasing. When considering association between preference for rice brand with demographic factors, civil status, ethnicity and monthly income had a significant relationship. According to the survey findings, quality and cleanliness of rice and food safety is highly considered by the consumers in all the considered districts. Results of the study confirmed that none of the variables related to extrinsic characteristics of rice is significant indicating that gender is not an influential factor for those variables. Taste of the rice, aroma of the rice, texture of the rice and ease of cooking are the most significant variables related to intrinsic characteristics of rice. According to the factor analysis results, sensory quality (aroma and the taste) were the most considering factors when consumers purchasing rice. Among these two factors aroma is the most important factor than the taste. Eye focus features are the second highest considering factor when purchasing the rice varieties by the sample respondents. Color, cleanliness, breakability of rice, appearance, shape and size are the factors considered by the sample respondents. Quality of the cooked rice was the third important factor. Swelling capacity, texture, ease of cooking, keeping quality after cooking and price of the rice were also important factors. Price was the least influential factor.

This study recommends that; Government policy must be strong to increase the quality standards of rice and has to introduce a mechanism to control high price fluctuations. Further, introduction of different sizes of rice packages was also recommended and proper rules and regulations must be implemented to rice production and marketing process.