

ABSTRACT

The supermarket sector in Sri Lanka is rapidly growing and Keells and Cargills are the two leading supermarket owners in Sri Lanka. Currently there is a growing demand for natural and traditional food products in Sri Lanka. This demand is high in supermarkets, too. Consequently, the main objective of this study was to identify the consumer preferences for natural and traditional food products in supermarkets.

A representative sample was selected from six areas having supermarkets in Colombo. The sample frame for each area consisted of fifty households. Ten respondents were selected for each area, leading to a total of sixty. To assess the market for natural and traditional food products, each respondent was interviewed using a questionnaire. Information was collected on preference for natural and traditional food products, frequency of buying, decision making in buying and quality of natural and traditional food products in supermarkets. This study was carried out over a period of two months.

The results revealed that 90% of consumers preferred to purchase natural food products, such as vegetables, fruits, cereals, meat and milk and traditional food products, such as *gotukola*, *mukunuwenna*, Jack fruit, *polos*, sweet potatoes, *halmasso* (sprat), brown rice, manioc and mushrooms. Out of the vegetables, about 74% of consumers preferred potato, beetroot, cabbage, carrot, beans and brinjols. Regarding fruits, 78% preferred apple, banana, orange, grapes, mango and pineapple. Approximately, 70% of consumers preferred freshness, quality, prices and taste when buying natural and traditional food products from supermarket. About 65% of consumers were not considering nutritive value of food products when buying natural and traditional food products. Three fourth of consumers' opinioned that the appearance of natural and traditional food products were moderate in supermarkets. About 42% of consumers' expressed that prices of natural and traditional food products were high in supermarket. About 34% of consumers did not agree that sales personnel were knowledgeable about natural and traditional food products in supermarket. Measures to increase quality and attraction of natural food products were also discussed.

Key words: Consumer Preference, Supermarket, Nutritive value, Natural food products, Traditional food products, Representative sample.