Consumer Awareness, Perceptions, and Health-Related Marketing of Ceylon Black Tea

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Local tea consumption in Sri Lanka is at a lower level. In addition, the threat of Sri Lanka losing its comparative advantage in the global tea market is ever looming. A dearth of literature provides evidence of the health benefits of black tea in a Sri Lankan context. Within this milieu, this study aims to assess the impact of socio-demographic factors on the awareness of the health benefits, and differences in perceptions among different consumer segments towards black tea consumption and to investigate the possibility of health-related marketing in black tea. A case study was carried out using a cross-sectional questionnaire by recruiting 150 local and foreign individuals over 18 years old, in the Nuwara-Eliya DS division by adopting cluster and convenient sampling respectively. The questionnaire focused on socio-demographic and awareness-related information, consumer perceptions based on the health belief model, and health-related marketing aspects based on a discrete choice model. Awareness of cardiovascular disease prevention got the highest mean score whereas bone health got the lowest. Education level and marital status positively, and age negatively affected the level of awareness ($p<0.05$). MANOVA results depict there are significant differences in consumer perceptions among immigration statuses, education and awareness levels ($p<0.05$). Multinomial logit regression results depict the probabilities of secondary and tertiary educated respondents choosing choices 4 (light color, sweet taste, high price with health benefits) and 2 (dark color, bitter taste, low price without health benefits) got positive and negative coefficients respectively. Choice 3 (dark color, bitter taste, low price with health benefits) was the base outcome. It could be concluded, (1) Consumer awareness is at a medium level (2) Age, education level, and marital status affect the level of awareness (3) Differences in perceptions among immigration statuses, education, and awareness levels (4) A possibility of health-related marketing in black tea.

Keywords: Consumer perceptions and awareness, Discrete choice model, Health belief model, Health benefits of black tea, Multinomial logit regression

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