

Development of Healthy Supermarket Initiatives and Strategies to Encourage Healthy Food Choices in the Retail Store Environment in Sri Lanka

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A healthy diet plays an important role in the maintenance of a healthy human body. Daily food consumption is influenced by food choices. Therefore, awareness about healthy and nutritious food consumption is important to improve the health status of a population. Food retail environments are settings that make food available and accessible to consumers. Modern food retail environments such as supermarkets have been identified as major contributors to consumers' choice of unhealthy foods in Sri Lanka leading to an alarming increase in non-communicable diseases. The foods available in the supermarkets may be classified as healthy to moderately healthy and unhealthy depending on the composition of the food and the health status of consumers. Therefore, consumers need more awareness to make healthy food choices. Healthy supermarket interventions are designed as a public health approach to promote and encourage healthy food purchasing. This research aimed to develop healthy supermarket initiatives for a supermarket chain in Sri Lanka by compiling a guidebook that includes retail foods identified as "healthy" and "unhealthy" food choices based on food composition and the health status of the Sri Lankan population. The research resulted in a guidebook (ISBN 978-624-97482-1-7) which comprises healthy food choices concerning specific health conditions, ages, and nutrient requirements for specific population groups. Information in the guidebook has been given based on the most recent literature reviews, food-based dietary guidelines, and the recommendations of nutrition experts. The guidebook will be used as a manual by the supermarket management team and is expected to provide guidance for the implementation of healthy supermarket interventions. The research concludes with recommendations for the retail sector that can be used to communicate the content of the guidebook to supermarket consumers through educational interventions, economic interventions, and by making store environment changes in the supermarket.

Keywords: Food based dietary guidelines, Food retail environment, Healthy food choices, Supermarket interventions

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