

Consumer Awareness and Perception on Highly Processed Food Products Available in Sri Lanka

H.A.S.U. Hettiarachchi, J.H.S. Madumali, R.M.S. Geethanjana and J.W.A. Sajiwanie

*Department of Food Science and Technology, Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka,
Belihuloya, Sri Lanka*

Highly processed food products are popular in modern world. There is a worldwide discussion regarding their positive and negative effects on human health. However, the studies on awareness, acceptance and misbeliefs of these food products are less in Sri Lanka. Therefore, this study was focused on consumer awareness and perception on highly processed foods available in Sri Lanka. Randomly selected 500 respondents from all over the country were interviewed using a structured questionnaire that was designed to obtain information on the general awareness and perception and factors influencing their buying behavior. Demographic information and occupation were collected to identify their effect on awareness and perception of highly processed foods. Respondents were also asked to state the level of perception of the family members. Results revealed that 74% of the respondents had awareness on highly processed foods. Highest awareness (95%) was observed in Colombo and Kalutara districts. Respondents below 45 years had approximately higher awareness than those above 45 years. Highest positive perception was observed among children in their families. According to the occupation, 92% of academia and researchers had awareness and positive perception towards highly processed food. The taste and convenience (53%) were the major reasons for consuming highly processed foods. Mostly consumed highly processed foods were ice cream, instant noodles and soft drinks. More than half of the respondents (57%) had selected retail shops as shopping place. Online buying choice had a small influence on the positive perception. Results clearly revealed that young generation and academia have better awareness and positive perception on highly processed food products.

Keywords: Consumer awareness, Convenience, Highly-processed food, Perception