Tea Manufacturers' Attitude towards Implementation and Maintaining Quality and System Certifications

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Tea plays a major role in the economy of several underdeveloped and developing nations in Asia and Africa. Tea production in Sri Lanka, plays a major role in the country's economy. Many standards are being applied for tea and international buyers very much concern about the certifications obtained. Today, maintaining quality of the product in the value chain is very crucial. Price movement in markets differ depending upon the quality. Therefore the objective of this study was to investigate the factors influencing tea manufacturers' attitude towards implementation and maintaining quality and system certifications in export trade. The overview and attitudinal characteristics of tea manufacturers were examined. Data were collected using data semi structured questionnaire. 82 respondents from three major tea growing regions based on the elevation, were participated in the survey. Based on the previous research done on factors considered in selecting quality certifications by tea exporters, awareness of market and certifications, cost and expenses, perceived benefits, perceived risks, demand for tea, extension support and competitive advantage were found to influence tea manufacturers' attitude towards implementation and maintaining quality and system certifications. Majority of the manufacturers in up and mid country were maintaining at least one quality system or standard while 79% of low country manufacturers were not maintaining any standard. Among the noncertified manufacturers, 34% of them do not have visible gain in implementing quality certification due to the perception of low returns to the investment incurred for implementing quality standards. Out of the certified manufactures, ISO 22000 and HACCP were the most obtained and there was a positive image within manufacturers' point of view on ISO 22000. Ethical Tea Partnership and Rainforest Alliance were more prominent corporate social responsibility based system certifications among tea manufacturers. The study reveals that awareness of market and certifications was the highest influencing factor for tea manufacturers' attitude towards implementation and maintaining quality and system certifications than others.

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