

Factors Influencing Organic Tea Purchasing in Boutique Hotels (Special Reference to Central Province Sri Lanka)

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In the recent past, consumer demand for organic food products has increased rapidly due to the various health benefits it offers. The hospitality industry is one of the key economic contributors in Sri Lanka and in -comparison to the other hotels, boutique hotels are classified as luxury hotel categories serving upscale, niche market segments. The main aim of this study is to determine the key factors influencing organic tea purchasing in Boutique-hotels. The study also takes efforts to explore the difficulties faced by the hoteliers in the organic tea purchasing process and the hotel Managers' perception towards organic product purchasing. The qualitative research method applied for the study to in-depth examines the scenario. Further, purposive sampling and structured interview techniques were employed in data collection and the thematic analysis method was used for data analysis. Primary data were gathered from 12 boutique hotels listed in Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority. The central province of Sri Lanka was chosen as the study location. Accordingly, the findings of the study revealed that upscale tourists prefer to consume more health-conscious products while considering the long-term health benefits. And it was also highlighted that boutique hotel guests' consumer patterns are quite different from traditional hotel guests where they usually tend to spend more on the quality and the value aspects of a certain product regardless of the price. Additionally, Product and Process related issues including climatic changes, poor packaging, lack of education and awareness, and inadequate government support, etc factors were highlighted as some of the key challenges faced by the hotel management in the organic tea purchasing process. Some practical implications are proposed for organic tea suppliers, tea purchasing hoteliers, the government, and the other stakeholder groups to ensure a conducive environment for organic tea consumers and suppliers.

Keywords: Organic tea; Purchase intention; Boutique hotels; Hospitality industry