

THE EFFECT OF NUTRITIONAL KNOWLEDGE ON CONSUMER EATING MOTIVATION AND THE MEDIATING EFFECT OF INTENTION TO DISCARD FAST FOODS: WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO FAST FOOD CONSUMERS IN COLOMBO DISTRICT IN SRI LANKA

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the impact of nutritional knowledge on consumer eating motivation in the fast food industry, with a focus on the mediating role of the intention to discard fast foods. Despite growing awareness of the adverse health effects associated with fast-food consumption, the prevalence of unhealthy dietary habits remains high, highlighting a disconnect between nutritional awareness and actual consumer behavior. This gap underscores the need for a deeper understanding of how nutritional knowledge influences consumer motivation and decision-making, particularly within the context of fast-food consumption in the Colombo District of Sri Lanka. This study aimed to investigate the relationship between nutritional knowledge and consumer motivation to consume fast food in Colombo, Sri Lanka. Understanding this link is crucial, as it sheds light on the extent to which informed consumers make healthier eating choices, contributing to public health initiatives. Utilizing a deductive approach grounded in positivist philosophy, this research tests specific hypotheses derived from the existing literature. Data were collected through structured questionnaires distributed to a sample of 390 respondents selected using convenience sampling. The data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) to assess the hypothesized relationships and explore the effects of nutritional knowledge on consumer behavior. The findings revealed that higher levels of nutritional knowledge are significantly correlated with a reduced intention to consume fast foods and an increased motivation to pursue healthier eating options. The intention to discard fast food was found to mediate the relationship between nutritional knowledge and eating motivation, suggesting that better-informed consumers are more likely to consider healthier dietary choices. These results highlight the importance of nutritional education in shaping consumer behavior and promoting healthier eating habits. The implications of this study are far from clear. For policymakers and health educators, the findings emphasize the need for targeted public awareness campaigns and educational interventions that address the gap between knowledge and behavior. Such initiatives could help reduce fast-food consumption and encourage healthier eating patterns. Additionally, this research provides valuable insights for stakeholders in the fast-food industry, suggesting that transparent and informative food labeling can be an effective tool for guiding consumer choices.

Keywords: Eating motivation, fast food consumption, intention to discard fast foods, nutritional knowledge, structural equation modeling (SEM)