

ASSESSING THE PURCHASING INTENTION FOR FROZEN MEAT AMONG SUPERMARKET CONSUMERS IN *BADULLA* DISTRICT OF SRI LANKA

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The rapid growth of the frozen meat sector in Asia-Pacific highlights a gap in understanding consumer motivations and purchasing intentions, emphasizing the need to align products and strategies with market demands. Hence, this research examined the determinants of consumers' purchase intentions for frozen meat in the *Badulla* district of Sri Lanka, based on an extended version of the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) as the foundational framework. A structured questionnaire was developed and the questionnaire was validated through a pilot study to assess clarity, reliability, and internal consistency using Cronbach's alpha. Data were collected from a sample of 182 supermarket shoppers. The sample size was determined based on guidelines for structural equation modeling (SEM), which recommend a minimum of 100 respondents. The analysis was conducted using SEM via SPSS version 22.0 and AMOS version 26.0 software. The SEM model achieved a good fit as evidenced by a CFI - 0.959, GFI - 0.934, and RMR- 0.019 indicating strong alignment with observed data. The analysis focuses on key determinants, including consumer attitude, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, and food safety concerns encompassing contamination risks, hygiene standards, and characteristics of frozen meat such as quality and texture. Results revealed that consumer attitude, food safety concerns and frozen meat characteristics significantly influence (CI-95%) purchase intention. The factor loadings for attitude ($\beta=0.204$, $p<0.01$), food safety concerns ($\beta=0.313$, $p<0.001$), and frozen meat characteristics ($\beta=0.246$, $p<0.001$) demonstrated strong correlations, underscoring the importance consumers place on these aspects when deciding to purchase frozen meat products. This study guides producers in aligning marketing and quality with consumer expectations, emphasizing attitudes and safety concerns in purchase decisions. Ultimately, this research helps stakeholders enhance consumer satisfaction and loyalty in a competitive market.

Keywords: Consumer attitudes, Consumer purchase intention, Market demand, Marketing strategies