

INVESTIGATING MEAT CONSUMPTION BEHAVIOR: A STUDY OF CURRENT PATTERNS AND ATTITUDES OF THE WESTERN PROVINCE, SRI LANKA

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Studying meat consumption behavior can provide insights into the local industry, especially for producers and policymakers. Hence, the study aimed to investigate the meat consumption behavior among consumers in Western Province, Sri Lanka, and identify current patterns and attitudes towards meat consumption. A pre-tested structured questionnaire was used to collect socio-demographic information, and meat consumption behavior from a stratified sample of 395 respondents residing in *Colombo, Gamapaha* and *Kaluthara* according to population size. The study sample predominantly consists of female respondents (67.8%) with the majority in the age group of 21-30 years (53.41%) and 46.45% living in semi-urban areas. The majority of respondents (88.57%) preferred chicken followed by beef (5.82%), pork (5.06%) and mutton (3.54%), consuming it 2-3 times weekly and purchasing 0.5 kg to 1 kg (51.39%) of fresh meat from meat shops (68.1%). Additionally, 83.04% consumed processed meat products, with sausages (63.41%) being popular due to their easiness of cooking (35.38%). A significant correlation ($p < 0.05$) was found between the type of meat consumed and gender, age, occupation, and religion. Meat consumption frequency, amount purchased at one time, and market choice were also found to have significant differences ($p < 0.05$) across the demographics. Nutrient requirements, age, and children's preferences were identified as priority determinants ($p < 0.05$) influencing meat and meat product preferences. People hold assorted perceptions about consuming chicken, pork, beef, and mutton. While many perceive chicken meat to contain antibiotics, harmful substances, and hormones, its affordability, versatility and cultural significance often outweigh these concerns. In contrast, beef and mutton consumption is limited by their higher cost. In conclusion, consumer behavior regarding meat preferences was diverse, making meat consumption a multifactorial practice with varied requirements. These insights can guide marketing strategies and product offerings to better meet the diverse needs and preferences of consumers.

Keywords: Consumer, Marketing strategies, Multifactorial, Preference