

Customer Perception and Attitude towards Value-added Products of Potato Varieties Grown in Sri Lanka

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With busy lifestyle, people are more concerned on ready-to-eat food with a good nutritional value. Therefore, food products upgrading is very important. Potato (*Solanum tuberosum*) being a perishable product, long-term storage is difficult. Hence, value-addition of potatoes would enhance the shelf-life, market value, nutritional value and farmers' income. This research study analyzes the customers' buying behavior on imported, value-added potatoes available in the market and identifies the feasibility of marketing locally-grown, value added potatoes. An online survey was conducted for the data collection from 25/01/2021 to 10/02/2021 by 155 respondents. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics. With regard to imported value-added potatoes, majority of respondents (78.0%) are willing to purchase them. The most significant reason is its fried taste (89.7%). The main reason of the rest of the respondents for not to purchase was their unwillingness to eat already processed food. The association between willingness and availability of value-added potatoes was statistically significant emphasizing the importance of product accessibility. Respondents in the age group of 20-25 years were stimulated in purchasing and with aging, willingness has declined. The most popular brand was "Pringles" while original potatoes fancied over flavored. Moreover, in focusing the perception towards value-added locally grown potatoes, the belief on healthiness and nutrition of value-added potatoes was high. Out of the total, 87.2% of respondents wish to purchase locally-grown value-added potatoes to save foreign exchange and 76.07% were interested in purchasing locally-grown, recommended raw potatoes for value-addition at home. Accordingly, maintaining the original fried taste of the potatoes, developing minimal processing techniques and sustaining nutritional attributes is required. Market availability of quality value-added potato products is essential to enhance customer purchasing. Growing suitable varieties will provide farmers with double benefits of value addition and selling branded varieties since there is a potential demand for locally-grown potato varieties in the market.

Keywords: *Customer Willingness, Locally Grown, Market Availability, Potato Varieties, Value-Addition*