

## FACTORS AFFECTING CONSUMER BUYING BEHAVIOR OF TEA: CASE STUDY IN WESTERN PROVINCE

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Present local tea market in Sri Lanka is led by a number of multinational companies and local producers. Competition among marketers for winning market share is always severe. All the activities of a business must meet consumers and consumer satisfaction. Thus the tea producing companies need information on consumer behavior to formulate strategic market plans. Behavioral patterns of consumers change with time and are influenced by many factors. This study focused on identifying the factors affecting the buying behavior of tea consumers. Data were collected from 1200 tea consumers selected from four types of super markets in the Western province, using a structured pretested questionnaire. Data were analyzed using descriptive methods, Chi-square test, Factor analysis and Binary logistic regression. The results of the binary logistic regression revealed that education level and income play a significant effect ( $p < 0.05$ ) on the brand loyalty. Factor analysis extracted three significant factors that affect tea consumers' buying behavior. First factor was loaded with product related variables such as taste, price, colour and packaging; and explained 31% of total variation. Second factor was loaded with marketing variables like advertisement, promotion, brand awareness and explained 17% of total variation. Third factor was loaded with variables related to life style of consumers and explained 8% of variation. Descriptive analysis revealed that all the consumers prefer free samples as sales promotion schemes and 56% respondents prefer bonus pack in addition to the free samples. Chi-squared test confirmed that promotional schemes had no significant effect on shifting from one brand to another and descriptive analysis revealed that sales promotion has only short term effect on the retail tea market. Further the study concludes that product, marketing and life style attributes are the major factors affecting consumer buying behavior and the companies can increase the market share by planning their marketing strategies, focusing mainly on product related factors.

**Keywords:** Brand awareness, Brand loyalty, Competitive, Consumer behavior, Marketing strategies