

SHIFTING TO ONLINE MARKETING OF AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS WITH THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC SITUATION IN SRI LANKA

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COVID-19 pandemic has changed the economic activities globally resulting in an increasing shift in consumers buying behaviour from traditional shopping to online shopping around the globe. However, the popularity and usage of online agricultural marketing are low in Sri Lanka. Therefore, this research intends to explore the factors influencing consumer's willingness to practice online marketing of agricultural products in Sri Lanka. A sample of 200 online customers who engaged in online shopping was selected using snowball sampling to collect primary data through an online survey. Collected data were analyzed quantitatively. Descriptive statistics identified an increasing engagement in online agricultural marketing especially for vegetables (58.5%), fruits (47.6%), and dairy products (45.1%) due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Consumer unawareness (42.2%), unavailability (25.2%), low quality (18.5%), and damages during delivery of agricultural products (15.6%) were identified as the main problems in online marketing. Ordinal logistic regression results exposed that the consumers' satisfaction level on online marketing was significantly influenced by the quality of agricultural products [Odds Ratio (OR): 2.87], availability of agricultural products (OR:1.21), product variety (OR: 3.22), after-sale services (OR: 3.07) and online security (OR: 3.43) at 5% significant level while delivery time (OR: 1.50) at 10% significant level. The results of binary logistic regression revealed that age (OR: 0.06), income (OR: 1.52), and the curfew period (OR: 1.14) were the motivative factors for online marketing of agricultural products in Sri Lanka at 5% significant level while locating in a high-risk area for COVID-19 (OR:1.14) was significantly influenced at 10% significant level. The study concluded that there is a growing tendency to practice online marketing of agricultural products in Sri Lanka. Therefore, online marketers should take necessary initiatives to offer trustworthy and esteemed services to increase the consumers' satisfaction in the online marketing of agricultural products in Sri Lanka.

Keywords: Agricultural products, COVID-19, Odds ratio, Online marketing, Satisfaction