

## Changing Consumer Preferences and Urban Buyer Behaviour: The Case of Sri Lanka

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According to the recent Consumer Finances and Socio-Economic Survey 2003/2004 conducted by the Central Bank of Sri Lanka, the behavioural patterns of urban consumer have drastically changed during the past two decades. This study attempts to identify the reasons behind this phenomenon. By reviewing of literature and holding discussions with experts, it was identified that the changing consumer preferences are the product of interaction among consumer-related variables, product-related variables and motives of food demand. In order to obtain the necessary facts about emerging patterns of consumer preferences, data was collected from both primary and secondary sources. The study analysed the changes in family consumption patterns in Sri Lanka and the socio-economic characteristics and income and expenditure patterns of urban shoppers. A strong relationship was identified between the two variables, emerging consumer preferences patterns and variables influencing product selection and place of shopping. There were a few prominent findings in this regard, namely (i) consumers shop at supermarkets because of the ability to get most of the weekly requirements by shopping done under one roof; (ii) most consumers consider quality, choice of goods and convenience of shopping over the traditional factors like price in making a purchase decision; and (iii) consumers who spend more on grocery items tend to use supermarkets. It was also revealed that the rapid growth of supermarkets also influences the emerging patterns of consumer preferences.

Key Words: Urban consumer; Consumer performance; Socio-economic characteristics; Super market

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