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PAPER

Consumption of Bottled Water and its Impact on Bottled Water Market in Sri Lanka

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Although the earth is covered with 70 per cent of water, less than one percent is available as easily accessible fresh water for human use. Water has become a scarce resource for which the demands are increasing very fast due to population growth. Being a country which gets enough rainfall, access to drinking water can not be very difficult in Sri Lanka, but bottled water was introduced to Sri Lanka as a source of drinking water in late 1980. Even though it was only foreigners who consumed bottled water at the early stage, today most locals have become bottled water consumers. The individual may use normal tap water at home but may prefer bottled water specially when away from home fearing the purity of water and other social influences.

According to public opinion, bottled water is considered completely safe to drink. However, bottled water also can be contaminated by chemical or biological agents. People's perception is that bottled water is of better quality and they are safe from water borne diseases if they consume bottled water. This perception, along with marketing strategies of companies causes people to consume bottled water. Therefore, this study deals with the identification of social phenomena of bottled water, by studying the overview of the bottled water market and suggesting reliable alternatives for bottled water.

In this research project the objective is to shed new light on how the perception of the individual has impacted on the bottled water market in Sri Lanka. It also seeks to study ways to save money spent on bottled water by suggesting reliable alternatives. This study focuses on consumer preferences, and behaviour with regards to bottled water consumption in Sri Lanka.

Learning more about bottled water consumers will help to identify why people prefer bottled water and if they reject water supplied by the Water Board or other sources, the reasons for that. The research study will be done studying facts related to water market in Gampaha, Kandy and Nuwara Eliya. Data related to the consumption of bottled water will be collected using questionnaires, interviewing of shop keepers and accessing reports of bottled water manufacturers.