Developing Healthy Initiatives to Encourage Healthier Food Choices in Sri Lankan Supermarkets

T.N.D. Manawadu
Department of Food Science and Technology, Faculty of Agriculture,
University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka
G.M. Somaratne
Department of Food Science and Technology, Faculty of Agriculture,
University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka
L. Weerasinghe
Jaykay Marketing Services (Pvt) Ltd, 148, Vauxhall Street, Colombo 02, Sri Lanka
N. Muthurathnandan
Jaykay Marketing Services (Pvt) Ltd, 148, Vauxhall Street, Colombo 02, Sri Lanka
N. Hettiarachchi,
Jaykay Marketing Services (Pvt) Ltd, 148, Vauxhall Street, Colombo 02, Sri Lanka
T. Demetrius
Diabetes Association of Sri Lanka, 50, Sarana Mawatha, Rajagiriya, Sri Lanka
A. Chandrasekara
Department of Applied Nutrition, Faculty of Livestock and Fisheries,
Wayamba University of Sri Lanka, Sri Lanka
J. Singh
School of Food and Advanced Technology, Massey University, New Zealand
N.M.A.I. Nikalansooriya*
Department of Food Science and Technology, Faculty of Agriculture,
University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka
Corresponding Author E-mail: ayeshanikalansooriya95@gmail.com

Abstract— Promoting the awareness and adoption of healthier food choices is crucial for enhancing the overall health of the population. In Sri Lanka, the rise of modern food retail environments, such as supermarkets, are leading to a change in the dietary habits of people. Unhealthier food habits is a major reason in the current alarming increase in non-communicable diseases. To address this issue, a cross-sectional survey was conducted involving 1067 participants to understand supermarket consumers' perceptions of healthy food choices. The survey results indicated a strong consumer interest in learning about healthy food options. Thus, this research further aimed to develop innovative initiatives for supermarkets, including the creation of a comprehensive guidebook that classifies food items as "healthy" or "unhealthy" based on their nutritional composition and relevance to the health status and dietary needs of the local population. The guidebook was compiled using the latest scientific literature on food, disease prevention, and established dietary guidelines. Research articles were sourced from databases such as Google Scholar and PubMed, using defined inclusion and exclusion criteria. A panel of nutrition experts meticulously evaluated the guidebook's content to ensure accuracy and relevance. The outcome of this research is a comprehensive guidebook (ISBN 978-624-97482-1-7) that features tailored healthy food selections linked to specific health conditions, age groups, and nutritional needs of various population segments. This guidebook serves as a practical resource for supermarket management, guiding to promotion of healthier food choices. It aims to facilitate changes within the store environment and support economic and educational interventions to encourage healthier dietary habits among supermarket customers.

Keywords— Dietary Guidelines, Food Retail Environment, Healthy Food Choices, Supermarket Intervention