

**AWARENESS AND ACCEPTANCE OF PLANT BASED DAIRY
ALTERNATIVES AMONG YOUTH IN POLONNARUWA
DISTRICT**



By

M.C.H.K.Pemadasa



FTC320

Main Library, Eastern University, Sri Lanka

Department of Biosystems Technology

Faculty of Technology

Eastern University, Sri Lanka

Chenkalady

2026

ABSTRACT

Plant based dairy alternatives (PBDAs) refer to beverages and products made from plant sources such as soy, almond, coconut, rice and oats, which serve as substitutes for traditional animal-based dairy. This study, titled “Awareness and acceptance of plant based dairy alternatives among youth in the Polonnaruwa district” aimed to investigate the overall level of awareness and acceptance of these alternatives among young consumers. A sample of 100 respondents between the ages of 15 and 30 participants was selected using a simple random sampling technique across seven DS divisions in the district in a cross-sectional descriptive study design. A pretested structured questionnaire was used to gather data, and SPSS version 22.0 software was used for descriptive statistics, correlation and regression analysis. The results showed a modest level of awareness, with 58% of the young people consumed PBDAs previously such rice, soy or coconut milk. The most popular PBDAs was coconut milk, which was followed by soy milk. According to regression analysis, acceptance was significantly impacted negatively by health perception ($\beta = -0.315$, $p = 0.020$) and significantly positively by availability ($\beta = 0.293$, $p = 0.010$) and environmental concern ($\beta = 0.353$, $p = 0.008$). The model confirmed that teenage behavior toward PBDAs is substantially influenced by sustainability and accessibility values, accounting for 33.1% of the variation in acceptance. The study concludes that although adolescent awareness is rising, convenience and environmental consciousness rather than taste or cost are the main factors influencing adoption. It suggests increasing market accessibility, highlighting the advantages for the environment, boosting local PBDAs production, and improving nutritional information. These results aid in the comprehension of consumer shifts toward sustainable eating habits in rural Sri Lanka and offer useful information to producers, marketers, legislators encouraging the development of plant-based foods.

Keywords: Acceptance; Availability; Awareness; Environmental Concerns; Health Perception.

TABLE OF CONTENT

DECLARATION iii

DEDICATIONiv

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT v

ABSTRACT.....vi

TABLE OF CONTENTvii

LIST OF FIGURESxi

LIST OF TABLESxii

ABBREVIATIONS xiii

CHAPTER 01 1

INTRODUCTION 1

1.1 Background of Study 1

1.2 Statement of the Problem.....3

1.3 Research Gap4

1.4 Objectives of the Study5

1.4.1 General Objective5

1.4.2 Specific Objectives5

1.5 Research Questions.....5

1.6 The Significance of the Study.....5

1.7 Organization of the Study6

CHAPTER 02 7

LITERATURE REVIEW 7

2.1 Introduction 7

2.2 Concepts of the Study 7

2.2.1 Plant-Based Dairy Alternatives..... 7

2.2.2 Acceptance of Plant Based Dairy Alternatives. 8

2.3	Theories and Models Relating to the Conceptual Framework.....	9
2.3.1	Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB)	9
2.3.2	Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM).....	9
2.3.3	Food Choice Motives Model	10
2.4	Factors Influencing Acceptance of PBDAs	11
2.4.1	Product Knowledge and Awareness	11
2.4.2	Price	12
2.4.3	Taste	12
2.4.4	Environment Concern	13
2.4.5	Availability	13
2.4.6	Health Perception.....	14
2.5	Hypothesis Development	14
2.5.1	Relationship Between Awareness and Acceptance of PBDAs among Youth	14
2.5.2	Relationship Between Taste Perception and Acceptance of PBDAs among Youth	15
2.5.3	Relationship Between Price Perception and Acceptance of PBDAs among Youth	15
2.5.4	Relationship Between Availability and Acceptance of PBDAs among Youth	15
2.5.5	Relationship Between Health Perception and Acceptance of PBDAs among Youth	16
2.5.6	Relationship Between Environmental Concern and Acceptance of PBDAs among Youth	16
2.5.7	Relationship Between Socio Demographic Factors and Acceptance of PBDAs among Youth	17
2.6	Conceptual Framework	18
CHAPTER 03		20

METHODOLOGY20

3.1 Introduction.....20

3.2 Research Design.....20

3.3 Study Area21

3.4 Target Population and Sample Size22

3.5 Data and Data Collection Method.....22

3.6 Data Analysis24

3.7 Validity24

3.8 Ethical Considerations25

CHAPTER 0426

RESULT AND DISCUSSION26

4.1 Introduction.....26

4.2 Respondents’ Demographic Information.....26

4.2.1 Age of the Respondents26

4.2.2 Gender of the Respondents27

4.2.3 Education Level of Respondents28

4.2.4 Monthly Income of Respondents.....29

4.3 Awareness and Knowledge.....30

4.3.1 Preferences for Plant Based Dairy Products31

4.4 Evaluating Factors Influencing Acceptance of PBDAs.....33

4.5 Examine Impact of Awareness and Socio Demographic Factors on
Acceptance of PBDAs.....35

4.5.1 Model Summary.....35

4.5.2 ANOVA Table36

4.5.3 Coefficients Table.....37

4.6 Hypotheses Testing.....41

CHAPTER 0542

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS42

5.1 Introduction.....42

5.2 Findings of the Study42

5.3 Conclusion43

5.4 Recommendations.....44

5.5 Suggestions44

5.6 Limitations45

REFERENCES46

APPENDICES53

Appendix 153

Appendix 257