

## Explore the Exporters' Perception Towards Branding for Ceylon Cinnamon

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### Abstract

Brand is the right tool to bring the products quality is known by the final consumers, to distinguish from the competitor and to reward the quality through a higher price. The research was intended to explore the exporters' perception toward branding for Ceylon Cinnamon to win the international market by following a mix method approach. This study was mainly consisted with interviewer administered questionnaire where the respondents were 40 Ceylon Cinnamon exporters out of the sample-frame which was prepared using 3 national databases, 8 focus group meetings representing major Cinnamon growing areas. Of the sample, 15% of the companies who engaged in Cinnamon industry has 40 years of industry experience and limited number of licensed exporters who acquired the Pure Ceylon Cinnamon trade mark given by the Export Development Board (EDB). Majority, 71% were engaged in the bulk exporting in composition of Ceylon Cinnamon export basket. Cinnamon, century old business but mainly export minimally processed Cinnamon; as in bale form. Oleoresin was the top gainer followed by bark oil and fractionates even as branded or non-branded. Exporters were given strongly positive perception towards the image of the country of origin since international buyers essentially looking forward it. The effect of country of origin image over private brands and Pure Ceylon Cinnamon trade mark were identified as nonlinear relationship. Product quality, price, level of value addition, buyers' bargaining power influence on brand perception. Of the sample, 41% stated there were no special branding strategy for Cassia due to the cheap price compare to the Ceylon Cinnamon. Cassia was the direct competitor for the price concern markets. Suggestions were obtained from the in-depth interviews conduct with Cinnamon exports were summarized as qualitative data. The suggestions were; to conduct an end market survey, allocate more room for consumer packs, quality packaging, clinically proven health benefits, usage of more viral media are some of suggestions were discussed. However, as a country, as an industry still far behind to outline the Ceylon Cinnamon by using new branding competencies to suppress the global competition originate from Cassia.

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