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Young consumers' response during milk powder unavailability: A case of Faculty of Agriculture, University of Ruhuna

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Abstract

Stock-outs of product goods are a common problem in the retail industry. The Sri Lankan media recently reported on an island-wide shortage of milk powder. However, there is a lack of information and very little is known about consumer responses during stock-out situations in Sri Lanka. As a result, the current study was designed to investigate how the relevance of items to objective needs, consumer preference, and emotional effect influence consumers' behavioral responses to milk powder unavailability. The study adopted the scales used by previous researchers and all the measurements were taken using 7-point Likert scale. First and second-year undergraduates of the Faculty of Agriculture, University of Ruhuna were selected as the target population who represent the segment of young consumers (N=435). A Google form-based structured questionnaire was prepared and emailed to the respondents. They were asked to fill out the questionnaires based on the milk powder buying behaviour of them during the stock-out. Accordingly, 100 responses have been obtained with a 23% response rate. The relationships among the main constructs considered in the study were tested using SMART PLS 3.0 with the bootstrap re-sampling method. Results revealed that the emotional effect ($t= 2.566$; $p= 0.011$) of the consumer significantly influenced the behavioural responses (number of milk powder packets bought) during the milk powder stock-out, at 5% significant level. Furthermore, relevance to objective needs ($t= 1.343$; $p= 0.180$) and consumer preference ($t= 1.055$; $p= 0.292$) did not influence the behavioural responses during the stock-out. The study concluded that young consumers' emotional effects lead to the changed milk powder buying behaviour and they tend to buy more milk powder packets during the stock-out. The findings of the present study are of a great significance for the milk powder marketers and retailers to understand the behaviour of the young consumers during stock-outs and to avoid negative behavioural responses to minimize negative consequences.

Keywords: Consumer responses, Milk powder, Stock-out

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