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**Held in Conjunction With The
National Exhibition**

PROCEEDINGS OF THE ABSTRACTS

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**Palmyrah Research Institute
Palmyrah Development Board**

NATIONAL CONFERENCE

Held in conjunction with the

National Exhibition 2026



“Palmyrah is the tree of life and the Prosperity of the Nation”

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Segment-Specific Communication Strategies for Conveying the Health and Nutritional Value of Palmyrah Food Products in Northern Sri Lanka

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There are approximately 60,000 acres of palmyrah trees in the Northern Province of Sri Lanka. However, despite growing evidence of their potential anti-diabetic and cholesterol-lowering properties, palmyrah food products have not achieved widespread commercial success. Consumer trust in food and health information is multidimensional, highlighting the importance of segment-specific communication strategies, and vulnerable groups such as ethnic minorities need culturally specific communication approaches. The literature on palmyrah food products revolves around food chemistry but fails to cover culturally adapted public health lifestyle intervention studies. Guided by Social Marketing Theory (SMT), this research seeks to derive segment-based communication strategies to inform various consumer segments about the health benefits of palmyrah in Northern Sri Lanka. This qualitative exploratory study employed purposive sampling to recruit 16 information-rich participants from the *Jaffna* District, including seven diabetic adults aged 24-50 years, three young adults aged 24-30 years, and six older consumers aged 63 years and above. Semi-structured interviews lasting 30-60 minutes explored participants' knowledge of the health benefits of palmyrah food products, health concerns relevant to their demographic group, trusted

information sources, and preferred communication methods involving visual, textual, and interpersonal formats. Interviews were conducted in Tamil, audio-recorded, transcribed, translated into English, and analyzed following Braun and Clarke's six-phase thematic analysis. QDA Miner Lite was utilized exclusively to manage and code the qualitative data. Three main themes were identified. First, hybrid 'intergenerational and clinical trust' revealed that diabetic participants initially relied on dietary advice from family members but sought confirmation from healthcare professionals before adopting health-related practices. Second, 'digital convergence of intergenerational trust' demonstrated that young adults valued traditional knowledge shared by grandparents while verifying such information through digital platforms before accepting it. Third, 'institutional and intergenerational dependency trust' indicated that older consumers primarily trusted healthcare professionals, public institutions, non-governmental organizations, and family members when making health-related decisions. These findings suggest that each consumer segment validates health information differently through clinical, digital or institutional sources, explaining the limited effectiveness of generic health communication. Across all participant groups, information overload reduced message effectiveness, whereas storytelling and culturally familiar communication were perceived as more credible, understandable and engaging than technical health information. The findings highlight the importance of adopting segment-specific communication strategies to promote the health and nutritional value of palmyrah food products. Digital video content may be more effective for young adults, community-

based audio communication may better engage older consumers, and research-supported health information delivered through healthcare professionals may be more persuasive for diabetic adults. These findings contribute to the application of SMT by demonstrating how different dimensions of trust influence communication preferences across consumer segments, and the study proposes a conceptual model, the generational knowledge loop, illustrating how traditional knowledge, institutional credibility, and digital verification interact in shaping consumer trust.

Keywords: Consumer segmentation, Nutritional communication, Palmyrah products, Social Marketing Theory (SMT), Sri Lanka

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