

## **ABSTRACT**

The objective of this survey study was to determine the consumption frequency of coconut water in relation to demographic factors and quality issues affiliated with the commodity. It evaluated consumer's preferences between fresh coconut water and bottled water and bottled coconut water and bottled water. The study assessed consumer's perception of coconut water therapeutic/ health properties. The survey interviewed 140 respondents from local supermarkets, 28 respondents per region from five regions namely North, South, Central, East and West Trinidad. The questionnaire was structured in general themes, these included preferences, demographics, quality and therapeutic issues. The survey was administered randomly, that is consumers were not prejudged according to some standard or inherent characteristics. The data received was analysed using Minitab 14-Chi Square Testing and One-Way Anova Unstacked. It revealed that consumption patterns had in fact had a strong co-relation with demographic variables. The questionnaire enquired about the age, employment, education and region of residence of interviewed respondents. The survey revealed that of all respondents (99.29%) of all respondents consumed coconut water, but was usually consumed infrequently (45.71%). It disclosed that the majority of respondents (25.72%) were within the 50 yr and over age category, (70%) of all respondents were females and generally respondents' attained secondary education (50.72%). Of all respondents (25%) were not from the area in which they were interviewed, although the majority of all respondents were from the Central region (26.43%) and (80.71%) of all respondents generally were employed. In terms of quality control issues, the study revealed that consumers that did not consume the bottled commodity indicated poor quality related experiences with the product (60% of the 76 respondents that did not consume bottled coconut water). Of the 76 respondents, the reasons generally included rancidity of product (37.86%), colour changes (37.86%) flavour changes (37.14%) and product expiry (25%). Respondents preferred the product fresh coconut water as compared to bottled water generally (67.14%). In assessing preference between bottled coconut water and bottled water (47.14%) of respondents, which preferred the later, had experience quality related problems, which was indicated, in the survey. The therapeutic beliefs held by consumers were varying. Generally of all respondents (75%) perceived coconut water to possess therapeutic properties and perceived it to be healthier than coconut water (78.57%). Of all responses, respondents indicated the main therapeutic

property of coconut water was to flush the bladder and kidneys (42.14%), (97.14%) of respondents were interested in the ability of coconut water to prevent diseases, this was highlighted in the fact that (82.86%) of respondents would prefer coconut water therapeutic properties versus modern day medicine. The research revealed that consumer's perception of therapeutic properties has validity and could be proven scientifically. Over the last two decades, therapeutic properties had been researched and documented, and new products are being derived in the quest to provide new consumer goods and producers attempting to meet changing demand.