Thai Durian: The Product Value of an Economic Crop from the Perspective of the Chinese Consumer Market

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Abstract

Durian, Southeast Asia's 'king of fruits', is among Thailand's leading economic crops, especially in terms of exports to China. This research investigates this strong-smelling and distinctive-tasting but nutritious fruit's product value from the perspective of Chinese consumers, whether they have visited Thailand or not. The study, applying a quantitative methodology involving descriptive and reference statistics, used a questionnaire and convenience sampling to collect data from 600 Chinese respondents. The results reveal that most were female, were aged 20–30 and had visited Thailand. There is a relationship between visiting Thailand and habitually eating fresh durian, durian's Chinese tradition-related consumption, and some beliefs surrounding durian, e.g. eating durian during pregnancy leading to child intelligence, durian's use as a mild laxative, and durian healing burns, alleviating fever when consumed with large amounts of water, reducing wrinkles and healing acne. However, there is no relationship between visiting Thailand and habitually eating processed durian, cooking meals with durian, consuming durian-filled mooncakes during the Moonlight Festival and believing that durian causes chronic scarring after surgery, heals blisters and aids digestion. Finally, while durian is prized for its taste and health benefits, its use is controversial, hence this research seeks to improve understanding of this iconic fruit, supporting the development of durian production and business strategies to meet future international demand.

Keywords: beliefs, China, consumption, fruit, Thailand