

Awareness and Relevance of Organic Food Products in Palakkad District, Kerala

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ABSTRACT

The technological developments have revolutionized the field of agriculture, while variety of chemical fertilizers and pesticides have increased yield without any concern of environmental measures for economic reasons. This leads the negative on human health. Organic foods consumption currently very popular all over the world because of concerns about intensive agricultural practices and their potential effect on human health and environment. The emerging lifestyle and increasing awareness towards nutritious, tasty and healthy food have surged the demand for organic food in recent years. The future of organic agriculture will depend, to a large extent, on consumer demand. So, it is vital to determine the awareness of consumers and their perception about the relevance of organic foods. So, this study is intended to find the awareness level of consumers and their opinion about the relevance of organic foods in their day to day life

Key Word: Organic food, Awareness, Relevance.

Introduction

In India, Agriculture is the prime concern for economic development. The technological developments have revolutionized the field of agriculture, while variety of chemical fertilizers and pesticides have increased yield without any concern of environmental measures for economic reasons. This leads the negative on human health. Organic foods consumption currently very popular all over the world because of concerns about intensive agricultural

practices and their potential effect on human health and environment (Roitner-Schobesberger et al., 2008). Organic food promotes no artificial preservatives and best maintain the originality of food. This prevents excess use of harmful ingredients and thereby ensures health. Gracia and Magistris (2008) declared that “the future of organic agriculture will depend, to a large extent, on consumer demand” (Aygen, 2012). So it is vital to determine the awareness of consumers and their perception about the relevance of organic foods. So, this study is intended to find the awareness level of consumers and their opinion about the relevance of organic foods in their day to day life.

Review of literature and Research Gap

Consumer’s awareness refers to product characteristics exploration and recognition by consumers. This is the organic product’s characteristics/attributes such as nutritional contents, whether the product is certified organic or not, locally produced or imported country of origin (if it is imported), labeling information including date of expiration, and level of freshness. Furthermore, specific brands are likely to be considered by the consumers to have high quality organic products, so such consideration may affect his or her decision-making about purchasing a specific brand of food products (Bravo, C.P et al, 2013).

Chouichometal. (2013) investigated the impact of socioeconomic and demographic variables on organic food purchase behavior in Bangkok. Based on his research findings he divided the respondents into three categories: those who have never heard of organic food, those who have heard but never purchased organic food, and those who have both heard and experienced consuming organic food. Then, contingency tables and chi-square tests were used to establish socioeconomic and demographic differences between the three types of consumers. He also explored the relevance of organic food in consumer’s life. there are three main motives to demand organic food in Bangkok: the perceived health benefits, the search for tastier food, and attraction offered by novel food products. Moreover, statistical analysis signified that organic food consumption in Bangkok tends to increase with age, being male, education, and income.

It is known that baby foods are very specific group which are demanded for a certain period by the consumers having babies. Similarly, As a result of a study performed in Greece, it was determined Greek consumers mostly recognized fruits and vegetables as organic foods too (Klukovski and Agoli, 2010). According to Sarıkaya (2007), the highly recognized organic foods were fruits and vegetables among Turkish consumers (61.2%).

It was determined by the research results which carried out in Spain that the main reason leading consumers to consume organic foods was the fact that organic foods had been cultivated without synthetic pesticides (39%). And also 34% of the Spanish consumers agreed that no preservatives and artificial additives had been used in these products (Briz and Ward, 2009).

The emerging lifestyle and increasing awareness towards nutritious, tasty and healthy food in metropolitan cities such as Mumbai, Chennai, Delhi, Gurgaon, Bengaluru and Pune have surged the demand for organic food in recent years (K. Gunasundari, P. Sathiyabama, 2016).

There are also only a few outlets to buy such products even in those cities and the consumers are majorly the creamy layer of the high income groups. Overall, the attribute concerning the environment was less significant amongst these consumers. The premium price is the major barrier for limited consumption of organic food products in India though most middle class people are well aware of its advantages and qualities (N. Varma 2016).

When analyzing foreign and Indian reviews, it is clear that the awareness and relevance of the organic products depends on certain variables. The researcher has an intention to find whether the variables discussed in the literature have same influence on Indian context also. Kerala is the state where the people give more importance to nature and natural product. So, the Palakkad district in Kerala is chosen for the study.

Objectives of the study

- To measure the level of awareness on organic food products in Palakkad district
- To analyze the role of demographic variables on awareness of organic foods

- To find out the relevance of organic foods

Research Hypothesis

- There is a significant difference in level of awareness of organic foods based on demographic variables.
- There is a significant agreement between consumers opinion on relevance of organic foods.

Research Methodology

The survey is carried out by structured questionnaire. The survey is conducted in selected super markets, shopping malls and departmental stores which sell organic products and exclusive organic product show rooms. The systematic sampling method is adopted for the study. Based on the pilot study results, sample size has been calculated using standard formula and 243 samples have been collected.

ANOVA has been used to find the difference in level of awareness based on demographic variables and Friedman rank test has been used to test the agreement between the consumers regarding the relevance of organic food.

ANOVA test on demographic variable and opinion on level of awareness

H₀₁:There is no significant difference in level of awareness of organic foods based on demographic variables

H₁₁:There is a significant difference in level of awareness of organic foods based on demographic variables

The difference in level of awareness is tested based on the demographic variables gender, residential area, age, educational qualification, occupation, family monthly income and gender using ANOVA.

Table 1

ANOVA test on demographic variable and opinion on level of awareness

S.No	Variables	Mean	SD	F-Value (P-Value)
1	Gender			2.035
	Male	4.03	0.54	(0.154)
	Female	4.12	0.62	Not Significant
2	Residential Area			4.421
	Urban	4.26	0.60	(0.012)
	Semi-Urban	3.97	0.53	Significant
	Rural	2.98	0.57	
3	Age			
	Less than 25 years	4.17	0.55	7.050
	25-35 years	4.26	0.67	(0.000)
	36- 45 Years	4.37	0.53	Significant
	46-55 Years	3.27	0.62	
	Above 55 Years	3.15	0.62	
4	Educational Qualification			
	School Level	3.83	0.58	10.319
	Diploma/ITI	3.98	0.57	(0.000)
	Graduate	4.23	0.54	Significant
	Post Graduate	4.45	0.53	
5	Occupation			
	Agriculturist	4.23	0.56	11.353
	Government Employee	3.96	0.53	(0.000)
	Private Employee	3.93	0.55	Significant
	Business	3.94	0.53	

	Others	3.92	0.55	
6	Family Monthly Income			4.426 (0.004) Significant
	Less than 15,000	3.54	0.53	
	15000-25000	3.64	0.54	
	25001-35000	4.12	0.57	
	35001-45000	4.23	0.53	
	Above 45000	4.21	0.63	
7	Marital Status			1.012 (0.315) Not Significant
	Married	3.95	0.61	
	Single	4.01	0.57	

From **table 1**, the P- values for Gender and marital status are 0.154 and 0.315 which are greater than 0.05. It shows that there is no significant difference in level of awareness based on gender and marital status. The mean values for these two demographic variables are closer to 4 depict that the people are having awareness about the organic food products. The P-values for other demographic variables residential area, age, educational qualification, occupation and family monthly income are 0.012,0.000,0.000,0.000 and 0.004 respectively. These P-Values are less than 0.05 which concludes that there is a significant difference in level of awareness based on residential area, age, educational qualification, occupation and family monthly income. By analyzing the mean values, the urban area has more awareness than other two residential area, the graduate and post graduate respondents have higher awareness, the agriculturist has higher awareness than other category respondents, the young age and middle age respondents have higher awareness than old age respondents and family with more than 25000 monthly income have higher awareness on organic foods than lesser income respondents.

Relevance of Organic Foods

H₀₂: There is no significant agreement between consumers opinion on ranking of relevance of organic foods.

H₁₂: There is a significant agreement between consumers opinion on ranking of relevance of organic foods.

Table 2**Friedman Test for ranking of relevance of organic foods.**

Relevance	Mean Value	Rank
Healthier/Nutritious	4.46	1
Safe/Not contaminated	4.21	2
Tasty	4.03	5
Readily available	3.93	6
Management of illness	4.17	3
Support for small capacity producers	4.11	4
Ecofriendly	3.76	7
Affordable	3.45	8

Table 3**Friedman Test for ranking of effectiveness of Recruitment Methods****- Test Statistics**

N	243
Chi-Square	926.231
Df	7
Asymp. Sig.	0.000

From the **table 3**, Friedman's test confirms this positive agreement with the significance level 0.000 at 95 percent confidence level. From the **table 2**, it can be concluded that in Healthier/Nutritious got the ranking of 1, Safe/Not contaminated got the ranking of 2, Management of illness got the ranking of 3, Support for small capacity producers got the ranking of 4, Tasty got the ranking of 5, Readily available got the ranking of 6, Ecofriendly got the ranking of 7 and Affordable got the ranking of 8.

Discussions and Conclusion

Majority of the consumers are having awareness on organic food products. By analyzing the mean values, the urban area has more awareness than other two residential area, the graduate and post graduate respondents have higher awareness, the agriculturist has higher awareness than other category respondents, the young age and middle age respondents have higher awareness than old age respondents and family with more than 25000 monthly income have higher awareness on organic foods than lesser income respondents. The organic food producers and sellers may conduct awareness campaign for people who are having less awareness. The major reason for going for organic products are healthier and Nutritious and safe/not contaminated. The ranking for affordability shows that the pricing is very high. So, the pricing strategies might be reconsidered by the producers and retailers.

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