

A Study on Factors Influencing Consumer Preference and Awareness towards Organic Vegetables with Special Reference to Kottayam District

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ABSTRACT

In the recent past consumers are more perceived of organic food because majority of them consider organic products are made up of natural substances. Consumers prefer organic foods due to factors such as safety, health, taste, nutrition value and freshness. The growing population, urbanization and high wages necessitated the state to depend on the neighboring states for fruits and vegetables in large quantities. In Kerala the organic vegetable market is in its inceptive stage, it has tremendous scope for growth and development. The findings about this study reveals that consumer prefer to buy organic food products, there are various factors which influence the preference for organic food products such as age, gender, education etc. The educated respondents are more aware about the organic food products. Consumers prefer to buy organic vegetables due to its safety, freshness and nutrition value. The study aims to find out the major factors which influence consumers to purchase organic vegetables.

Key words: Consumer Preference, Organic Food, Organic Vegetables, Factors, the market

1. INTRODUCTION

In the recent past consumers are more perceived of organic food because majority of them consider organic products are made up of natural substances. Consumers prefer organic foods due to factors such as safety, health, taste, nutrition value and freshness. Organic food products are those agricultural produce which are free from pesticides, herbicides and synthetic fertilizers. Because of its advantages consumers are more perceived of organic foods and they are ready to pay a premium price for it. Although, the organic vegetable market in Kerala is in its nascent stage, it has tremendous scope for growth and development.

Teaming up with the government to promote organic farming in the state, the Vegetable and Fruits Promotion Council Keralam (VFPCCK) has come up with 'Grow Your Own Food' (GYOF) initiative. The plan is to encourage more and more people to cultivate pesticide free, nutritious and healthy food on their rooftop by setting a Smart Kitchen Garden. The Smart Kitchen Garden, the first of its kind initiative in Kerala, will have its maiden launch in Kochi. Later, it is likely to be expanded state wide.

There was a time when the people of Kerala relied on home grown vegetables, which were safe to eat. The growing population, urbanization and high wages necessitated the state to depend on the neighbouring states for fruits and vegetables in large quantities. Tamil Nadu soon became the major supplier of vegetables to Kerala. As it happens when people gorge, Kerala was blissfully unaware of the rising fertilizers' and pesticides in the imported vegetables. For states like Tamil Nadu, the huge demand from Kerala turned out to be a lucrative opportunity. It

bumped up the supply of vegetables by using vast tracts of irrigated land. Low wages too helped.

Confronted with this terrible situation, the State Food Safety Council carried out a field study to delve into the pesticide issue. The studies showed the usage of high levels of chemical pesticides and fertilizers by farmers. In recent times, government agencies, social organisations, political parties, women's organisation and farmers' Self Help Groups (SHGs) are all participating in organic farming revolution in the state.

2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Consumers prefer to use safe, healthy, tasty and nutritious food in their daily diet. In the recent decade, it has resulted in an increased demand for organic food in Kerala. Understanding consumer preference is necessary to meet their growing demand for organic vegetables in the state. It is also important to study their awareness about the advantages of consuming organic vegetables in their daily diet. So, this research is trying to portrait 'The Factors Influencing Consumer Preference and Awareness towards Organic Vegetables in Kerala with special reference to Kottayam District.

3. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To know about the factors influencing consumer preference towards organic vegetables.
- To study consumers awareness about the advantages of using organic vegetables in their daily life.
- To suggest suitable measures thereof.

4. SCOPE OF THE STUDY

- This study will try to shed light on the factors influencing consumer preference and awareness towards organic vegetables.
- This study will try to answer the following question –“What made the consumer to prefer the organic vegetables in Kottayam district”

5. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

AREA OF THE STUDY

The area of the study is confined to Kottayam district.

SOURCE OF DATA

- The primary data has been gathered directly from the respondents using a structured questionnaire which will be circulated to the public within the area of the Kottayam district with the purpose to investigate the factors affecting consumer preference towards organic vegetables.
- The secondary data has been gathered from journals, newspapers, magazines and websites.
- Sampling design of the study
- Convenient sampling technique was used to select the respondents.
- Sample of 150 respondents is taken for this study.

TEST FOR ANALYSIS

The data collected will be analysed on various statistical techniques.

6. LITERATURE REVIEW

(Anupam Sign , Priyanka Verma, 2017)In their study, they have brought out the factors influencing Indian consumers' actual buying behaviour towards organic food products. The results have confirmed four factors i.e. health, consciousness, knowledge, subjective norms and price that influence the consumer attitude towards organic food products. However, purchase intention towards organic food is affected by these four factors along with one additional factor i.e. availability. The result shows that these five factors also influence the actual buying behaviour but attitude and purchase intention mediates the relationship. Further, socio demographic factors such as age, education and income also found to have an impact on actual buying behaviour. This study provides a better understanding of consumers' attitude, purchase intention and actual buying behavior towards organic food products.

(Nayana Sharma,Dr Ritu Singhvi, 2018) The study conducted by the researchers aims to study on consumer perception regarding organic food may add insight to emerging organic food industry in India and worldwide. Organic products are not so much popular among consumers because of lower productivity of organic produce by farmers, which in result lead to the high market price of organic food. There is a need to create awareness about the advantages of organic food products among people and promote its use whereas on the other hand there is the foremost need to motivate the farmers to opt for organic farming. A number of researchers have identified the demand of organic food products worldwide and in India. Further the various factors that influence consumer perception of organic food products have also been identified. Some studies have also been undertaken preference, knowledge, and satisfaction regarding organic food products. Having reviewed several studies and having identified the gap, the investigator felt a foremost need to undertake the present investigation.

(R. Krishna, P. Balasubramaniam, 2018) The authors points out the fact that the concept of awareness and knowledge has turned out to be the most critical factors which resulted a change in the consumer's preference towards organic products initiating a strong development in organic food market. Moreover the consumer's consciousness regarding the negative effects caused by the conventional farming, gradually drove the consumers around the world to opt for organically grown or produced food products. The implementation of manufacturing as well as processing techniques is extremely subjected to the demand for such products in the market. Higher the positive attitude displayed by the organic consumers, higher will be the product's market demand. Through this article various factors which resulted in the major shift in consumer behaviour towards Organic Food have been reviewed and discussed.

(Amudha, Dr.M.Kanagarathinam, 2017) The present study aims at analysing the factors affecting preference of consumers for organic food products. Organic food and cultivation is not new to India, but the green revolution which has changed the pattern of food consumption and cultivation for few decades. Organic food is becoming more and more popular, as People look for ways to live a healthier, pesticides-free, environmentally friendly, and sustainable lifestyle.

7. ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATIONS

This chapter is devoted to analyze the survey data in tables. On the basis of the analysis of the data presented in these tables, interpretations are made.

FACTORS INFLUENCE CUSTOMER PREFERENCE TOWARDS ORGANIC VEGETABLES (DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS)

FACTORS	N	MINIMUM	MAXIMUM	MEAN	STD.DEVIATION
Safety	150	0	5	4.10	1.163
Health	150	1	5	4.02	1.058
Taste	150	1	5	3.81	.986
Nutrition Value	150	1	5	3.55	.959
Freshness	150	0	5	3.51	1.091
Price	150	1	5	3.49	1.067
Availability	150	1	5	3.33	.923
Quality	150	1	5	3.21	.971
Environment Friendly	150	1	5	3.18	1.037
Convenience	150	1	5	2.96	1.092
Valid N	150				

Source: Primary survey

TABLE NO 1

The mean value given in the above table shows the factors influence customer preference towards organic vegetables. The mean value is represented in the table is in decreasing order. The average scores representing the level of customers is the minimum in the case of convenience (2.96) and it is the maximum in the case of safety (4.10). The factors influence customer preference towards organic vegetables in their decreasing order is as follows Safety, Health, Taste, Nutrition Value, Freshness, Price, Availability, Quantity, Environment Friendly and Convenience

FACTORS INFLUENCE CUSTOMER PREFERENCE TOWARDS ORGANICVEGETABLESBASED ON RANKS

FACTORS	RANK									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Safety	69	23	15	12	9	8	6	2	2	3
Health	23	38	34	21	12	9	6	4	2	1
Taste	17	21	24	32	29	8	3	8	6	2
Nutrition Value	13	24	17	28	26	19	11	8	2	2
Freshness	13	19	25	25	24	23	13	1	4	3
Price	2	2	2	4	10	17	21	32	33	27

Availability	6	4	11	6	13	20	29	25	21	15
Quality	5	16	10	12	14	28	31	21	6	7
Environment Friendly	3	2	7	5	6	7	12	25	44	41
Convenience	3	2	5	8	5	11	17	19	31	49

Source: Primary survey

TABLE NO 2

The above table shows the factors Influence customer preference towards organic vegetables. The ranks assigned from 1 to 10. Based on the ranks given by the respondents it is clear that major factors influencing customer preference are safety, health, taste, nutrition value and freshness. Based on the study price, availability, quality and convenience has less influence. 69 respondents assigned 1st rank to safety, 23 respondents assigned 1st rank to health, 17 respondents assigned 1st rank to taste, 13 respondents assigned 1st rank to nutrition value, 13 respondents assigned 1st rank to freshness, 2 respondents assigned 1st rank to price, 6 respondents assigned 1st rank to availability, 5 respondents assigned 1st rank to quality, 3 respondents assigned 1st rank to Environment Friendly and 3 respondents assigned 1st rank to convenience.

AWARENESS OF THE CUSTOMERS ABOUT ORGANIC VEGETABLES ON THE BASIS OF AGE

AGE WISE CLASSIFICATION OF THE RESPONDENTS	MEAN	N	VARIANCE	MINIMUM	MAXIMUM
Below 20	4.0333	3	.303	3.50	4.60
20 to 40	3.5405	37	.410	2.50	4.80
40 to 60	3.4953	106	.374	1.90	5.00
Above 60	3.4500	4	1.083	1.90	4.10
Total	3.5160	150	.395	1.90	5.00

Source: Primary survey

TABLE NO 3

The above table shows the awareness of customers about organic vegetables on the basis of age. The awareness of customers about organic vegetables below 20 years is highest (4.0333) on a six-point scale with a minimum variance of 0.303 and a minimum range score of 1.00 which indicates that the awareness of customers about organic vegetables below 20 years do not differ. The awareness of customers about organic vegetables above 60 years is lowest (3.4500) on a six-point scale with a maximum variance of 1.083 which indicates that the awareness of customers about organic vegetables above 60 years differ with regard to awareness of organic vegetables.

H₀ :- There is no significant relation between awareness of customers about organic vegetables with regards to age.

H_a :- There is significant relation between awareness of customers about organic vegetables with regards to age.

ANOVA – AWARENESS OF CUSTOMERS ABOUT ORGANIC VEGETABLES AND AGE

SOURCE OF VARIATION	SUM OF SQUARES	DF	MEAN SQUARE	F	SIG.
Between Groups	.888	3	.296	.746	.526
Within Groups	57.933	146	.397		
Total	58.822	149			

Source: Primary survey

TABLE NO 4

The ANOVA Table shows the significance value (.526). Since the significance value is more than the standard value (.05), the difference in the mean value not significant. Hence, the null hypothesis is accepted. The relation between awareness of customers about organic vegetables with regards to different age groups is not significant.

AWARENESS OF THE CUSTOMERS ABOUT ORGANIC VEGETABLES ON THE BASIS OF GENDER

GENDER	MEAN	N	VARIANCE	MINIMUM	MAXIMUM
Male	3.4475	61	.375	1.90	4.60
Female	3.5629	89	.408	2.00	5.00
Total	3.5160	150	.395	1.90	5.00

Source: Primary survey

TABLE NO 5

The above table shows the awareness of customers about organic vegetables based on gender. The awareness of female customers who purchases organic vegetables is highest (3.5629) on a six-point scale with a variance of 0.408 which indicates that the awareness of female customers who purchases organic vegetables is high. The awareness of customers about organic vegetables, male customers who purchases organic vegetables is less (3.4475) on a six-point scale with a variance of 0.375 compared to female customers which indicates that the male customers awareness about organic vegetables is less when compared to females.

H₀: There is no significant relation between the awareness of customers about organic vegetables with regards to gender

H_a : There is significant relation between the awareness of customers about organic vegetables with regards to gender.

ANOVA – AWARENESS OF CUSTOMERS ABOUT ORGANIC VEGETABLES AND GENDER

SOURCE OF VARIATION	SUM OF SQUARES	DF	MEAN SQUARE	F	SIG.
Between Groups	.482	1	.482	1.222	.271
Within Groups	58.340	148	.394		
Total	58.822	149			

Source: Primary survey

TABLE NO 6

The ANOVA Table shows the significance value (.271). Since the significance value is more than the standard value (.05), the difference in the mean value not significant. Hence, the null hypothesis is accepted. The relation between awareness of customers about organic vegetables with regards to gender is not significant.

8. MAJOR FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

The study is focused on Factors Influencing Consumer Preference and Awareness towards Organic Vegetables. Based on the analysis of data collected from a sample of 150 respondents, the study arrives at the following findings.

- It is clear from the studies that major factors influencing customer preference are safety, health, taste, nutrition value and freshness.
- It is clear from the studies that awareness of customers about organic vegetables on the basis of age is highest in case of age below 20 years when compared to other age groups.
- The study shows that relation between awareness of customers about organic vegetables with regards to gender is not significant.
- The study indicates that the awareness of customers about organic vegetables above 60 years is lowest when compared to other age groups.

9. CONCLUSION

In the recent past consumers are more perceived of organic food because majority of them consider organic products are made up of natural substances. Consumers prefer organic foods due to factors such as safety, health, taste, nutrition value and freshness. The findings about this study reveals that consumer prefer to buy organic food products, there are various factors which influence the preference for organic food products such as age, gender, education etc. The educated respondents are more aware about the organic food products. Consumers prefer to buy organic vegetables due to its safety, freshness and nutrition value. The marketers who are dealing with organic vegetables should provide safe, fresh, healthy products to retain the consumers. Also they have to adopt better marketing strategies and to expand the present organic vegetable market.

10. REFERENCE

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