

A Study on Consumer Preference And Perception Towards Organic Food Products In Kottayam District

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Abstract- High population growth is one of the major problem faced in our country. Production of more agriculture food product is needed to meet the demand of the people. In one side the use of chemicals and pesticides increased the productivity of agricultural product and in other side it created huge health issues to the human being. Organic food products are the solution to the particular issue because it is free from pesticides, fertilizers and artificial chemicals. This paper discusses the consumer buying behavior and tries to identify the factors that influence the consumer preference and perception towards organic food products.

Keywords- organic products, buying behavior, consumer preference, perception

I. INTRODUCTION

Traditionally, India is an agriculture country and we had depended agriculture to the economic well being of the people living in the country. People cultivated various agriculture products for their day to day needs and exchange their products in the local market for a fair price also. After industrialization the entire situation changed. Changes occurred in the socio and cultural activities of the society. Income of the people increased through occupation, business and through other activities. In a family both husband and wife works together for their livelihood. The busy schedule of the family made changes in their purchase behavior and started the usage of packed food products. But it leads to several health problems among the people.

Nowadays people are more aware about the side effects of artificial chemicals and toxic compounds used by the manufactures in producing various products. People started to think about the old system of agriculture. So the demand of organic product is increased in metros and even in rural areas. Consumers are getting information about the evil effects of packaged products from there on personal consumption practices and through different media. The common health issues like Obesity, Cancer, heart disease, high blood pressure and diabetes are the reason for the over usage of chemicals in some non organic food products.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Athena Prince (2018) identified the consumption of Organic food products should become a habit of life among the people. Even if a growth is visible in the number of organic food consumers, the strength is still not up to the mark. There should be regular demand and consumption of organic food among the consumers. He also noticed that proper awareness about the health benefits of the organic food products and the harmful consequences of consuming inorganic food products must be made popular among the people.

NeethuUdayan and RenjuKurian (2018) remarked that behaviour has a strong influence in terms of consumer purchases. They are the main triggers in the consumer purchasing process and also influence the perception of a product. The factors that influencing the consumer buying behaviour are motivational, promotional, situational and product characteristics.

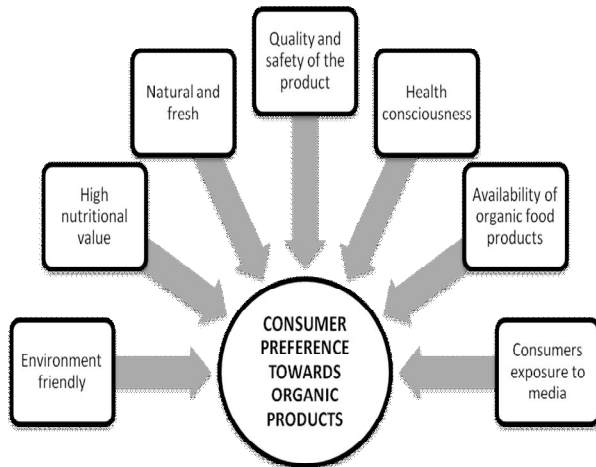
Abisha KA and P Kannan (2018) statedthat majority consumers were alert to organic food, its edges and issues related to conventional food.Educatedrespondents are highly aware about the toxic chemicals contained in the non organic products and its evil effects.But still majority purchase conventional food and not organic frequently as a result of some outstanding reasons like high value of products, lack of data connected from wherever to shop for, risk of obtaining cheated.

Accoording to Rupesh Mervin M and Velmurugan R (2013) Consumer's who have a good monthly income is having positive attitude towards organic products. Urban consumer's attitude towards organic products is found to be high whereas consumer's residing in Semi-urban area has low level of positive attitude towards organic products due to the poor awareness with regard to organic goods.

H.M. Chandrashekar(2014) found that consumer behavior plays a major role in Organic food products segment. The marketers of organic foods need to be innovative and dynamic in order to complete with the changing purchase

behavior in the Organic food products market among urban residents. The importance of organic food products was ignored for quite a long period. As results of environmental sustainability, importance is shifted towards Organic food products rather than conventional farming.

III. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY



IV. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The important objectives of the study as follows;

1. To identify the factors influencing consumer preference towards organic products
2. To know the consumers perception towards organic products

V. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present study was descriptive in nature. Primary and secondary data were used for the study. The primary data were collected from the consumers those who are using organic food products. The study was conducted in Kottayam District of Kerala and convenience sampling technique was used to select the respondents. A total of 100 valid samples were collected. Consumers were contacted directly at the point of purchase. The secondary data were retrieved from research reports, books, periodicals and Internet.

VI. DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The data collected was tabulated and analysis has been made. For the data analysis statistical tools like Friedman Test and Mann-Whitney U Test were used.

FACTORS INFLUENCING CONSUMER PREFERENCE TOWARDS ORGANIC FOOD PRODUCTS

The most influencing factors which prompts the consumers to go for organic food products are consumers exposure to media, environment friendly, high nutritional value, natural and fresh, quality and safety of the product, health consciousness, availability of organic food products.

FRIEDMAN TEST

Factors	Mean Rank
Consumers exposure to media	5.01
Environment friendly	4.64
High nutritional value	3.55
Natural and fresh	3.64
Quality and safety of the product	3.39
Health consciousness	3.10
Availability of organic food products	4.70

Source: Primary data

Table No.1

The above table depicts the mean rank obtained for the factors influencing consumer preference towards organic food products.

INTERPRETATION

The mean ranks obtained for the seven factors behind the consumer preference towards organic food products are stated above. The lower the ranks, the higher will be the preference. As per Table No.1, the highest preference is given to health consciousness (mean rank 3.10), Quality and safety of the product (mean rank 3.39), high nutritional value (mean rank 3.55). To have a clear assessment of the factors influencing consumer preference towards organic food products, Friedman test is used to test the following hypotheses.

H0: Rank preferences are not significant in the factors influencing consumer preference towards organic food products

H1: Rank preferences are significant in the factors influencing consumer preference towards organic food products

Test Statistics^a

N	100
Chi-Square	82.290
df	6
Asymp. Sig.	.000

Friedman Test
Table No: 2

Test Statistics of factors influencing the consumer preference towards organic food products

INTERPRETATION

The χ^2 statistic provides a value of 82.290, which is significant at 5 percent level of significance ($p=0.000 < 0.05$). Therefore, the null hypothesis of “Rank preferences are not significant in the factors influencing consumer preference towards organic food products” is rejected. This indicates that the rank preferences are significant in the factors influencing consumer preference towards organic food products.

From the analysis it is found that the most influencing factor which prompts the consumers to go for organic products is that they are health consciousness. It is very important to see if these responses show any differences between male and female consumers. Since the data provides ranks given by respondents, a Non- parametric test is used.

MANN- WHITNEY U TEST

Ranks

	Gender respondents	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Health consciousness	Male	60	55.88	3353.00
	Female	40	42.43	1697.00
	Total	100		

Source: Primary data

Table No.3

Mean rank obtained for the gender of respondent’s preference towards health consciousness as a reason to purchase organic food products

INTERPRETATION

The mean rank obtained for the gender of respondent’s preference towards health consciousness as a reason to purchase organic food products are stated above. The lower the ranks, the higher will be the preference. From the mean ranks, it is found that female customers (mean rank, 42.43) are more influenced to health consciousness

In order to validate that Mann Whitney U test is applied with the following hypothesis.

H0: There is no difference between the male and female consumers in their responses on the factors influencing consumer preference towards organic food products.

H0: There is difference between the male and female consumers in their responses on the factors influencing consumer preference towards organic food products.

Test Statistics^a

	Health consciousness
Mann-Whitney U	877.000
Wilcoxon W	1697.000
Z	-2.386
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.017

Test statistics of gender of respondents influenced to purchase organic food product due to their preference to health consciousness

INTERPRETATION

Mann-Whitney Test gives the result of 877.00 with the p value of .017 which is significant at 5 percent level of significance. As the value of $p < .05$ we can reject the H0 and accept the hypothesis. There is difference between male and female consumers in their response on factors influencing the preference of organic food products. Therefore, we can conclude that the female respondents are more health consciousness than male respondents the most influencing factor towards the preference of organic food products.

VII. FINDINGS

- 60 % of the respondents were male.
- 42% of the respondents falls between the age group of 40 -50. The respondents belonging to this category are highly aware about the evil effects of non organic food products and they are more healthy consciousness also.
- The 44% of the consumers are graduates followed by undergraduate education with 26% and other qualification with 30%. People having high education qualification are more interested to purchase organic food products.

- Among the consumers 51.8% of them belong to rural area, and the rest 48.2% of them belong to urban area. Urban people are more interested to purchase organic products.
- 52.2% buy organic vegetables, followed by 22.3% organic fruits, 14% buy other organic food products, and the rest 11.5% buy dairy products. Thus the study revealed that majority of the consumers buy organic vegetables.
- Majority of the respondents are interested to purchase organic vegetables and fruits.
- 85% of the respondents are very much satisfied with the purchase of Organic Food Product.
- The major factors behind the consumer preference towards organic food products are health consciousness, Quality and safety of the product and high nutritional value.
- The study found that female respondents were more influenced to purchase organic food products because they are more healthy consciousness.
- Respondents opined that due to the growing demand of organic product, sometimes its availability is less in the market.

VIII. CONCLUSION

Consumers buying behavior is changed and people more interested to purchase organic food products from the stores. The article aimed to provide an insight into the consumer preference towards organic food products. The study was conducted in Kottayam district of Kerala. The results showed that there are various factors affecting consumer preference towards organic food products. Health consciousness is the most important factor for the consumer which leads to prefer organic food products. There is difference between male and female customers in their response on the preference towards organic food products. The female respondents were more influenced to this factor.

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