

Analysis of Awareness among Consumers towards Organic Food Products: With Reference to Vellore Organic Consumers Perspective.

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Abstract

There is a community expectation in every country that food must be safe, in general for most of the people and most of the time, this expectation is not met. The safety of food at all times cannot be controlled through strict legislation and regulations. Much of the responsibility for food safety lies with the agricultural sector and the processed food industry to ensure that reliable procedures are being practiced to produce consistently safe primary produce and processed foods. The responsibility also lies with food outlets and consumers to ensure food is handled and prepared in such a way that they do not introduce new risks. India is now looking at a "cluster" approach to increase area under chemical-free farming in other states. Many states have already started earmarking exclusive organic farming zones with Maharashtra leading the pack with 932 exclusive cluster followed by Madhya Pradesh (880), Rajasthan (755). The challenge for food regulators is to maintain a food regulatory system that delivers safe food for the population, enables consumers to make informed choices and also maintains public confidence in the food regulations.

Providing significant evidence by the government that there is a low level of risk requires a method of analysing food risks that is evidence-based and transparent, thus it results in effective management strategies which must be communicated clearly to consumers. The aim of this study is to analyse consumer awareness on organic food products with reference to Vellore City, TamilNadu. The study will be based on the data collected from the organic consumers in Vellore city, Tamil Nadu, India. A survey questionnaire will be developed to collect qualitative questionnaire from the consumers of the study. In this backdrop, the present research work is an attempt to explore basically on consumers level of awareness on organic food products with the consideration of Indian Organic industry. The present study results shows that

Key Words: *Organic Food Products, Awareness, Health-risk, Safety*

Introduction

Over the past several decades, Organic farming has become increasingly global in scope. Organic food is defined as a product from a farming system which avoids using synthetic fertilizers, pesticides and sewage sludge, genetically modified organisms, or ionizing radiation. Antibiotics and genetically –modified organisms are prohibited in organic standards for animal husbandry while only 30 additives are permitted in certain conditions (Soil Association, 2000). The demand for organic food products is dramatically rising in India as the population becomes more affluent and more educated about health and wellness issues, leading to greater consciousness in food choices. By adding organic manure to the soil and using silt from small local ponds, Non-Pesticide Management (NPM) farmers replenish the organic content of the soil. This increases yield as well as makes the crops less vulnerable to diseases as well as too certain kinds of pests. Scientists advocating non use of pesticides in agriculture argue that pest infestations occur when the ecological balance is disturbed and that happens to disproportionate increase in the population of an insect species. Non-pesticidal remedies are easy to prepare with almost no cost. The main ingredients are biological waste, seeds and leaves of various plants. However, they take time to make. Hence, it ended up creating a market for enterprising farmers those who have started Non- Pesticide Management shops in their villages.

Although awareness of organic products is spreading in India and it started to gain more attention and thus there is still a huge unmet need for information among the consumers. More supermarkets and kirana stores do not yet sell organic products, although availability in supermarkets is rapidly improving. Retailers are not

able to offer a complete range of food products in the market. Consumers in developed countries are more familiar with wide range of organic food products when compared to undeveloped and developing countries. Organic retailers as well companies are making tireless effort to expand their product range but due to various hindrances such as: due to lack of supply, unavailability etc. Consumers are more reluctant in purchasing organic products as they prefer to purchase only partly organic. Supplying a wide product range, organic retailers are also struggling to guarantee a consistent product availability and quality of fresh produce. Organic stakeholders use several marketing strategies to improve their product availability, improve supply chain integration, to provide training for farmers and assist in demand-based production planning as well.

Organic companies and retailers with supply chains are trying much to expand their product range. Local organic food products and seasonal produce are marketed as a part of enjoyable and sustainable food lifestyle. Awareness among the seasonality of agricultural produce is declining and people end up eating of new products and varieties. Several organic retailers and companies are making an effort to make organic food available to local stores, so that it can reach a broad spectrum of consumers. Organic produce is considered to be an elitist product. Hence, awareness must be spread among all classes of people.

Literature Review

The literature review focussed for this study on awareness among Consumers towards Organic Food Products: An Indian Organic Consumers' Perspective. In order to validate the importance of this study, various literatures have been reviewed to identify the problems in the study. Ihsan Effendi and Paham Ginting explored the effects of variables of organic food knowledge, environmental knowledge, health knowledge, culture, product attribute, subjective norms, and familiarity on organic attitudes, purchase intentions and behavior. Ramesh and Divya (2015) indicated that purchase of organic food products are considered environmental friendly of production and healthier. Most of the organic consumers are tend to be older and highly educated and trust in the authenticity of the goods and prices are also issues. Umamaheshwari and Chandrasekar (2015) analysed organic products encompass a paradigm in its awareness and accessibility. Consumers are much aware as they are reluctant in purchasing of organic products due to cost and availability about the range of products. Mohamed Bilal Basha and Ramesh (2014) examined that health concern is the prior motivation to choose organic food and also analysed the impact of demographic variables on the buying intention of consumers of organic products. Justin Paul and Fyoti Rana (2012) studied that health, availability and education from demographic factors positively influences the consumer's attitude towards buying organic food. Overall satisfaction of consumers for organic food is considered to be more than inorganic food but the satisfaction level varies due to different reasons. Zenab sayed saleki and Seyedh Maryam Seyedsaleki (2012) proved that organic culture, environmental concern, price, subjective norms, quality and familiarity affect attitudes and thereby purchasing organic food. Mihai Rosca (2011) proposed consumer health considered to be the vital factor in market development and segmenting the market towards organic food products. Somnath Chakrabarti (2010) stated that relative importance attached by the experts to key variables in the consumers' purchase process of organic food. Marija Radman (2005) indicated that organically produced goods considered as healthy, tasty and of good quality. Ecologically grown organic food products in the market and effective marketing strategies makes customers to gain much knowledge on organic food products.

Methodology

The objective of present study is to analyse the consumer's level of awareness on organic food products with reference to Vellore district. The current research is based on the conception of exploration studies in the research methodology. Exploration of study will be particularly useful when researchers lack knowledge in problem identification and that will be met during the study. It is a preliminary study followed in this study. An empirical study develops concepts more clearly, develop operational definitions, establish priorities and improve the final research design. Hypothesis for the research are required. Both quantitative and qualitative techniques are applicable. For the fulfilment of present objectives we set the following hypothesis;

- There is an association between the educational qualification and awareness on organic food products among consumers in Vellore City, TamilNadu, India.

Research Design

Research Type: Empirical Study

Method of data collection: Survey Method (for primary data)

Instrument: Structured questionnaire

Sampling Method: Convenience Sampling

Sample Size: 200

A sample of 200 respondents was selected for the study. The study sample includes the respondents from Vellore city, TamilNadu, India. The sample was chosen using convenience sampling method. Questionnaires were used to collect data from the respondents. Structured questionnaire were framed from various researches to suit this specific study. Self-administered questionnaires were distributed to the respondents for the study. 210 questionnaires were distributed to the respondents. Out of which 200 were completed in all respects. 10 questionnaires were partially filled. Data analysis was done using SPSS version 21.

Findings

Based on Table –I demographic characteristics of the sample as well as select information about the respondents and their educational qualification. The percentage of respondents based on their gender is male (48.5%) and female (51.5%).

Table 1. Select Characteristics of Survey Sample

Characteristics	Value	Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	97	48.5
	Female	103	51.5
Total		200	100
Educational Qualification	Illiterate	17	8.5
	Secondary	32	16
	Graduate	77	38.5
	Post Graduate	54	27
	Professional	20	10
Total		200	100
Occupation	Private	66	3.3
	Business	65	32.5
	Government	49	24.5
	Student	20	10
Total		200	100
Age Category	Less than 25	44	22
	25-35	49	24.5
	36-45	55	27.5
	46-55	32	16
	More than 55	20	10
Total		200	100
Annual Income	Less than 2,50,000	55	27.5
	2,50,000-5,00,000	86	43
	5,00,001-7,50,000	39	19.5
	7,50,001-10,00,000	20	10
Total		200	100
Location	Urban	109	54.5
	Semi-urban	61	30.5
	Rural	30	15
Total		200	100



Table II provides information on association between education qualification and consumer’s awareness on organic food products. The chi-square test revealed that there exist a significant association between the educational qualification of respondents and awareness on organic food products. From the chi-square test output, table-II, it is shown that, a significance level of 0.56(Pearson’s) has been achieved. This means that chi-square test shows a significant association between the variables at 95% confidence level.

Thus, we conclude that at 95% level, the educational qualification of the respondents and consumer’s awareness on organic food products are associated significantly. From the obtained contingency coefficient of 0.426, it can be interpreted that there is an association between the dependent and independent variables are significant. And also from the Lambda Asymmetric value(along with educational qualification dependent) 0.121, we thus conclude that there is a moderate level of association between the variables. While analysing the level of awareness among the respondents towards organic food products it has been found that educational qualification have an greater impact on organic food products.

Table 2: Relationship between Education and awareness on Organic food products

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	20.934	16	.056
Likelihood Ratio	23.182	16	.002
Linear-by-Linear Association	1.437	1	.020
N of Valid Cases	60		

The minimum expected frequency is 12.10

Statistics	Value	Assumption Standard Error	Approx. T ^b	Approx. Sign
<u>Contingency Coefficient</u>	0.426	-	-	0.050
Lambda: Symmetric				
Awareness on organic Products	0.109	0.076	1.368	0.095
Dependent	0.121	0.072	1.671	0.043
Education Level Dependent	0.097	0.111	1.308	0.093
Goodman and Kruskal Tau: Awareness on organic Products				
Dependent	0.094	0.039	-	0.012
Education Level Dependent	0.110	0.044	-	0.056

Number of Missing Observation: 0

Conclusion

Organic food consumption is increasing due to environmental and health concerns associated with food products. As consumer awareness on organic food products and trust are increasing the most effective way for raising the market share. To produce all varieties of organic products due to its various agro climatic regions. Hence, this holds promise for the organic producers to tap the market which is growing progressively in the domestic market related to the export market. The present study concludes that, educational



qualification plays a vital role in analysing the level of awareness among consumers towards organic food products. . To conclude this, the organic food products will expand to grow by overcoming the hindrances and also problems on implementing agricultural market in India.

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