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AWARENESS AND INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES ON ORGANIC FOOD PRODUCTS IN ERODE DISTRICT, TAMILNADU

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ABSTRACT

Consumers' food consumption patterns are changing rapidly. Consumers become more concern about the food they consume. They tend to consume foods that are nutritious, healthy, safe and friendly to the environment and animals. An individual with a positive attitude towards a organic food product is more likely to make a purchase. This makes the study of consumer opinion is highly important for a sellers. The present study examines the awareness and individual differences of consumers towards the organic food products .With a sample of 500 respondents the data obtained from the survey were analyzed with the help of convenience sampling method in Erode District of Tamil nadu state of India.

KEYWORDS

Consumer awareness, Consumer opinion, Environmental friendly, Organic food.

INTRODUCTION

Now a days the food products which are produced by farmers are pesticides mixed products due to get more productivity. It caused to cancer, reproductive dysfunction, diabetes, autism, asthma, birth defects, Parkinson's and Alzheimer's diseases and more. To free from those harmful diseases, organic food products are grown up. Organic products are grown without the use of synthetic fertilizers and pesticides, plant growth regulators (hormones), and genetically modified organisms. Organic agriculture relies on natural products and processes to grow crops, improve soil quality, control pests and promote bio-diversity. As far as possible, organic farmers rely on crop rotation, green manure, compost, and biological pest control to maintain soil productivity and control pests. A well-balanced and biologically active soil will provide the crop with sufficient nutrients for optimum growth and yields, with a minimum of pest and disease problems. Organic foods are foods that are produced using methods of organic farming – that do not involve modern synthetic inputs such as synthetic pesticides and chemical fertilizers. Organic foods are also not processed using irradiation, industrial solvents, or chemical food additives. Allen, Gary J. & Albalá, Ken, ed. (2007)⁽¹⁾The organic farming movement arose in the 1940s in response to the industrialization of agriculture known as the Green Revolution. Drinkwater, Laurie E. (2009)⁽²⁾

1.1 ORGANIC CERTIFICATION

"Certified Organic" is a term given to food products produced according to a set of standards. Organic standards define a set of practices for production and handling which must be followed for the farmer's products to be labeled and sold as "Organic". Before a product can be labeled "Organic", a Government-approved certifier inspects the farm where the food is grown to make sure the farmer is following all the rules necessary to meet the national organic standards. Companies that handle or process organic food before it goes to market must also be certified. As part of complying with the standards, an audit trail, or record keeping system, is kept by the farmer, handlers and processors by which a crop may be traced from field to storage to sale. All certification bodies require an accurate audit trail as proof that acceptable organic management practices have been followed.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Soler et al., 2008; Freeland-Graves and Nitzke, 2002 states that Awareness and knowledge has become critical factor in changing the attitude and behaviour of consumers towards organic foods, which in turn is expected to drive the growth in the organic food markets. Gracia and Magistris, 2007; Tsakiridou et al., 2006; Lockie et al., 2004; Millock et al., 2004; Briz and Ward, 2009 revealed in their study there are several factors which affects the awareness level on organic foods among the consumers. It has been empirically investigated that socio-demographic profiles, food buying behaviour and nutritional knowledge of the consumers are most likely to affect the awareness level and purchase decisions of organic foods. Vermeir and Verbeke, 2004 research result showed that Consumers do not always buy sustainable products as consequences of environmental concern or to benefit the community or due to personal beliefs but mainly to give priority to health, to be part of the social group, to distinguish from others and to accomplish the need to try out new technologies Hanna Stolz (2011) found in research work reported that positive assessments of organic production referred to 'better taste', 'healthier', 'no artificial additives', and 'no chemical synthetic pesticides', 'limited use of antibiotics', and 'no GMOs', etc. Aryal et al (2009); Briz and Ward 2009; Gil and Soler 2006; found that more information about the organic food market, which increases consumers' organic food knowledge, is important because it positively influences consumers' attitudes towards organic food products. Storstad and Bjorkhaug 2003; Voon, Ngui, and Agrawal 2011; Sangkumchaliang and Huang 2010 found that variety of factors that can potentially influence organic food consumption. Concern for health, environmental protection, concern for the chemical residues in conventional food products, pesticides, nutritional concern, as well as improved taste and flavour in organic food products are some of the factors identified. Siti Nor Bayaah Ahmad and Nurita Juhdi (2007) Research result indicated that people do aware of what is happening to the surroundings with regards to the environment and ecology problems and most consumers perceived that organic food product is healthier. They portray a positive attitude towards organic food and exhibit willingness to pay at certain amount of price. However there are still fewer facts to show whether consumers' knowledge and awareness would influence their actual purchase intention towards organic food.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The pesticides mixed product are caused to cancer, reproductive dysfunction, diabetes, autism, asthma, birth defects, Parkinson's and Alzheimer's diseases and more. The Organic food has been grown without the use of toxic chemicals, pesticides or fertilizers. The food is as natural as can be, safer for the environment and usually tastes better too. Organic food has plenty of advantages when compared to the non-organic food that have been processed with

artificial preservatives and chemicals. But still people are not aware quietly. Even though organic food plays a vital role however some factors are influencing them at the time of purchase which has been given most priority and to know the consumers' future opinion is indispensable for the retailers.

OBJECTIVE OF STUDY

- To know the awareness of the respondents on organic food products
- To Analyses the Opinion of the respondents towards the organic food product
- To identify factors that might influence to purchase of organic food among consumers
- To find the Reasons for not to purchase Organic food products by non users of organic food products

HYPOTHESIS OF THE STUDY

The main aim of the study is to test the following hypothesis:

- H1:** There is significant difference between Gender and awareness towards Organic products
- H2:** There is significant difference among different age groups and awareness on organic product.
- H3:** There is significant difference among different Academic Qualification and awareness on organic product
- H4:** There is significant difference among male marital status and awareness on organic products.
- H5:** There is significant difference among male Occupation and awareness on organic products
- H6:** There is significant difference among male Residential area and awareness on organic products.
- H7:** There is significant difference among different income group and awareness on organic products.
- H8:** There is significant difference among Residential area and reason for not to purchase organic food products.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study was carried out in Erode District of Tamil nadu state of India. A total of 500 respondents were taken up for the study by convenience sampling method .Primary data were collected from the respondents by means of a pre-tested questionnaire which was designed to obtain socioeconomic indices, information on consumer awareness, past and future opinion about organic products, Factors influencing to purchase of organic products & Reason for not to purchase organic products .

FINDINGS & SUGGESTIONS

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN DEMOGRAPHIC FACTORS AND AWARENESS LEVEL OF THE RESPONDENTS ON ORGANIC FOOD PRODUCTS

Source: Primary Data

From the above table, the results of chi-square tests revealed that there is a significant relationship between four independent variables (Age, education level, Occupation and Family income) and aware level of organic foods products. As far as age concern the middle age group of 21-30 years of respondents are more aware on organic food products. In education concern, graduates those who completed degrees are more aware. In the occupation concerned business people are more aware than others and family income concerned people those belong to the income group of 30,001-40,000 are more aware than other income groups.

OPINION OF THE RESPONDENTS TOWARDS ORGANIC PRODUCTS IN FUTURE

Opinion of the Respondents	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
I have not bought organic foods in the past and I am not thinking about buying organic foods now	36	7.2	7.2	7.2
I have not bought organic foods in the past and I am thinking about buying organic foods sometimes in the near future	114	22.8	22.8	30.0
I have not bought organic foods in the past and I am definitely planning to buy organic foods in the future	134	26.8	26.8	56.8
I buy organic foods, but not regularly (Occasional buyers)	71	14.2	14.2	71.0
I regularly buy organic products	145	29.0	29.0	100.0
Total	500	100.0	100.0	

Source: Primary Data

From the above table,29% of the respondents are buy the organic products regularly.26.8% of the total respondents not bought in the past and definitely planning to buy in the future. Moreover 22.8% of the respondents have not bought in the past and about buy sometimes in the near future,14% of the respondents are Occasional buyers and 7.2% of the respondents not bought organic foods in the past and about buying organic foods now.

Details	Awareness	(%)	Unawareness	Percentage(%)	Total	Percentage(%)	Chi-Square	df	Sign
Gender									
Male	184	53	56	37	240	48			
Female	165	47	95	63	260	52	10.324	1	0.001
Age									
Below 20 years	60	17	28	19	88	18			
21 - 30years	98	28	48	32	146	29			
31- 40 years	97	28	39	26	136	27	1.425	4	0.840
41-50 years	47	14	18	12	70	14			
Above 50 years	47	14	18	12	60	12			
Education qualification									
No formal education	53	15	36	24	89	18			
School level	72	21	26	17	98	20			
College level	171	49	50	33	221	44	2.438	4	0.385
Diploma	52	15	39	26	91	18			
Marital status									
Married	254	73	89	59	343	69	9.371	1	0.002
Unmarried	95	27	62	41	157	31			
Occupation									
Agriculture	65	19	30	20	95	19			
Business	115	33	64	42	179	36	6.246	4	0.182
Employed	84	24	24	16	108	22			
Professional	41	12	16	11	57	11			
House wife	44	13	17	11	61	12			
Area of residence									
Rural	71	20	32	21	103	21	11.930	2	0.003
Semi-Urban	178	51	54	36	232	46			
Urban	100	29	65	43	165	33			
Family income per month									
BelowRs. 10,000	49	14	26	17	75	15	3.387	4	0.495
Rs10,001-20,000	48	14	23	15	71	14			
Rs20,001-30,000	92	26	29	19	121	24			
Rs30,001-40,000	122	35	54	36	176	35			
Morethan 40,000	38	11	19	13	57	11			

FACTORS INFLUENCING THE PURCHASING ORGANIC PRODUCTS

Types of Factors	Factors	Factors loading	Cronbach's Alpha
Environmental Attitude Factors	Protect from illness	.920	.9052
	Environmentally friendly	.917	
	Absence of growth hormones	.891	
Safety Aspects Factors	Hygienic & protective	.889	.9770
	Safe to consume	-.761	
	No side effects	.259	
Healthy Aspects Factors	Good Taste	-.693	.9910
	Healthy and Nutritious	.660	
	Not used harmful fertilizers	.601	
	No chemical residues	.511	

Source: Primary Data

ROTATED COMPONENT MATRIX(A) KMO AND BARTLETT'S TEST

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.	.647	
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	685.122
	df	45
	Sig.	.000

Based on KMO measure of sampling adequacy test , it was found that the factor analysis data was appropriate with the value of 0.647, which falls between the ranges of being great and appropriate of factor analysis data. Bartlett's Test was utilized with the result which indicates a highly significant result with p=0.000 (p<0.05) and therefore factor analysis is appropriate. People responses on 10 factors were reduced to 3 sets of related factors through principal component analysis, namely Environmental Attitude Factors, Safety Aspects Factors and Healthy Aspects Factors .It revealed that Environmental factors are influenced more to buy organic food products as it had a higher loading factor compare than rest two factors.

REASON FOR NOT TO PURCHASE ORGANIC FOOD PRODUCTS

Residential area	Reason for not to purchase					
	High price	No trust on purity	Not availability	No healthy	no taste	Total
Rural	8	5	7	4	3	27
%with in reason for not to purchase	26%	13%	23%	24%	20%	21%
Semi-Urban	16	25	13	10	11	75
%with in reason for not to purchase	52%	64%	43%	59%	73%	57%
Urban	7	9	10	3	1	30
%with in reason for not to purchase	23%	23%	33%	18%	7%	23%
Total no.of respondents	31	39	30	17	15	132
%with in reason for not to purchase	24%	30%	23%	13%	11%	100%

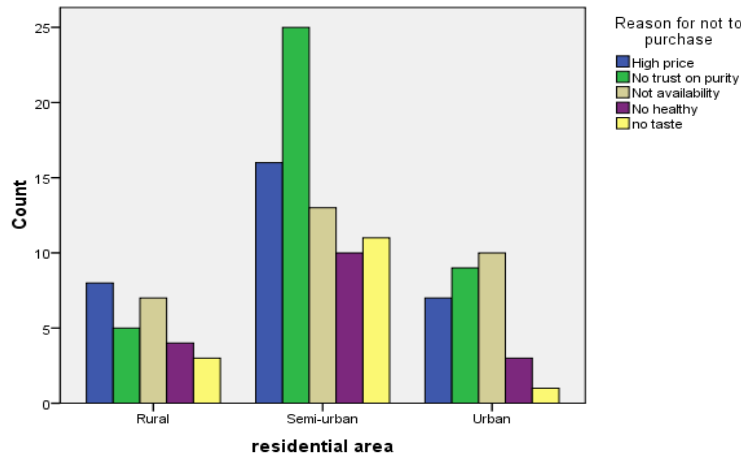
Source: Primary Data

CHI-SQUARE TEST

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	7.334(a)	8	.501
Likelihood Ratio	7.969	8	.437
Linear-by-Linear Association	.352	1	.553
N of Valid Cases	132		

expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 3.07.

Bar Chart



The above table inferred that 132 respondents are not to buy organic food products. Among them 27% of respondents from rural area, 75% of them from semi-urban and remaining 30% of them from Urban area. The main reason for not to purchase organic food products is 30% of the respondents claims “no trust on purity” and the 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th reason is High price, Unavailability, No healthy, no tasty respectively. The Chi square test revealed that there is a significance relationship between residential area and Not purchasing the organic food product.

SUGGESTIONS

1. Awareness programmes may be organized for general public about the advantages of organic products.
2. Organic foods may be offered at cheaper price (i.e.) To get the consumers at affordable rate.
3. Proper certification may be given to products as labeled “Organic” to specify the “purity”.
4. Organic Products may be offered by many shops by the retailers to avoid unavailability.
5. Advertisement may be given for organic products by social organization to ensure health.

CONCLUSION

This paper has established the awareness level of the consumer is not up to mark. Since they have a aware, some people are still non users for the reason of No trust on purity, High price and Unavailability of organic food products. So awareness programme organized for farmers initially and to motivate them to produce it. By the way supply can be increased. It may avoid high price and unavailability of the product. Another main conclusion from this study has been that consumers are not very well informed about the benefits of organic Products. Proper labeled organic product can be increased the trust on organic. There is a strong role for the private sector in promoting the consumption of organic products whose demand outlook is quite bright.

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