



CHALLENGES AND ISSUES FACED BY CONSUMERS IN BUYING ORGANIC FOOD

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ABSTRACT

The world is taking up a healthier turn for good as people seem to accept the inclusion of organic food as a part of their daily life. Organic foods are those which are grown by avoiding the use of synthetic fertilizers and pesticides. Academics and reviews suggests that there is a growing demand for consuming organic foods. Awareness on health concern and various related benefits of lifestyle are the factors that driving the growth of consuming organic foods. Organic production combines best environmental practices, preservation of natural resources, animal welfare standards while ensuring no use of genetic engineering, pesticides, additives, or fertilizers; each stage of the organic food production being controlled and certified. Organic foods are regarded as “credence goods” because some of the attributes that consumers may consider are neither obvious nor easily verified. Therefore, these three terms are interconnected as they forge a substantive common denominator - healthfulness. The concepts of green, smart and organic foods are herein recounted together with their interdependence and relationship to health and sustainability. Though the potential for organic foods are beneficial, consumers on the other side are facing many challenges. In this paper, an attempt has taken to understand the challenges and issued faced by the consumers in accessing the organic foods. The study reveals that cost factor and non-availability of organic foods were the major issues and certain suggestions were provided to overcome the challenges.

KEYWORDS: Organic, Environmental, Credence, Genetic, Healthfulness, Sustainability

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INTRODUCTION

The thought of health foods by many consumers cannot be disparaged in this age. Both for health and sustainable impacts, green, smart and organic foods keep ringing bells in the ears. They can also be regarded as functional foods, which provide advanced technological properties and health claims, and may also be derived from the recycling of food wastes. That raising health benefits of consuming organic food and growing health concerns are the major driving force behind this massive growth. In organic agriculture, the use of pesticides is restricted, while residues in conventional fruits and vegetables constitute the main source of human pesticide exposures. Epidemiological studies have reported adverse effects of certain pesticides on children's cognitive development at current levels of exposure, but these data have so far not been applied in formal risk assessments of individual pesticides. With the rising levels of education and awareness, increasing disposable income, global exposure, and initiatives by the government, Indian consumers are also becoming progressively conscious about their health. Since the last decade, organic foods have gained widespread attention and acceptability in the Indian domestic market. Organic farming addresses soil, human, and environmental health. Organic farm animals are expected to be fed with certified organic food that contains no animal byproducts. Organic crops cannot be grown with synthetic fertilizers, synthetic pesticides or sewage sludge. They cannot be genetically engineered or irradiated. Organic animals must eat only organically grown feed and cannot be treated with synthetic hormones or antibiotics. India is becoming a global producer of organic crops. The government of India is offering strong support and promoting organic farming as it will increase the economic contribution, positive impact on biodiversity, and effective

soil management. Organic foods are getting popular in India due to the availability of organic manures in rural areas, the depleted soil and product quality, as well as increased commercialization and competitiveness of the Indian agro-market. Since, organic food is bounded with more beneficial and advantages, consumers also facing some of the challenges and issues while buying or consuming organic foods. For purchasing organic foods, the surrounding propagandas seem confusing and misleading to consumers. If the propagandas and other challenges are properly addressed, more consumers may consider green foods. In addition to this, there are challenges associated with carbon footprint for food items. Therefore, organic food processing techniques need optimization and standardization. This study was aimed to analyze more about the issues on organic foods faced by consumers and to provide suitable suggestions for the problems.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In India, organic food is in new stage has experienced immediately fast growth in the past few years. Organic foods are seems to be growing more in the market, and the fact is that there is a positive attitude about organic foods. In spite of the growing market, consumers also facing many challenges. The higher cost of organic food, the expensive process in the form of intensive management, labor used in the organic food production, consumer changing perception on health & Life style turns into relatively low purchase level of organic food. Thus, the research aims to investigate about the major issues faced by consumers during the purchase of organic foods.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Mr. M. Elayaraja, Dr. C. Vijai (2020) there is a developing significance on health benefits as people are getting cognizant about the food themselves their relatives and family members. Thus, there is a degree for organic farming developed products. Prior people used to



expend quality local vegetables, heartbeats and organic products. This brought about a life span and solid way of life. This paper provides an overview of organic farming benefits and challenges and its present scenario in India.

Mendon et al, (2020) the farming of organic products is a unique practice which balances the environmental sustainability and also controls the detrimental effect both on customer's safety by creating a positive notion in the minds of the customers.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To understand the demographic profile of organic food consumers.
- To analyze the challenges and issues faced by consumers on organic foods.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In due consideration of the above-mentioned objectives, the following methodology has been adopted for conducting the present study. Sampling unit consist of selected organic food

consumers at kanniya kumari District. Data has collected from 384 respondents from the study area. Cluster sampling method has been used for the study.

A) Data Source: This study is both descriptive and analytical in nature and hence both primary and secondary data have used for the study.

Primary Data: It has collected from the respondents who consumes organic food on regular basis at kanniya kumari district through Interview schedule.

Secondary Data: Secondary data has collected from various Books, and Websites.

DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF ORGANIC FOOD CONSUMERS

The aim of this study is to prove that profile of organic food consumers is dependent on their socio-demographic characteristics as well as to shape universal organic food consumer profile. The study has been analyzed by using percentage analysis.

TABLE NO.1
DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF ORGANIC FOOD CONSUMERS

SI.NO	CATEGORIES		FREQUENCY	PERCENT
1	Gender	Male	197	51.3
		Female	187	48.7
		TOTAL	384	100.0
2	Occupation	Employee	132	34.4
		Businessman	143	37.3
		Professional	109	28.3
		TOTAL	384	100.0
3	Location	Rural	72	18.8
		Semi-urban	150	39.1
		Urban	162	42.2
		TOTAL	384	100.0
4	Taluk	Kalkulam	114	29.7
		Thovalai	149	38.8
		Thiruvattar	121	31.5
		TOTAL	384	100.0
5	Income group	Middle Income group	262	68.2
		High Income group	122	31.8
		TOTAL	384	100.0
6	Source of	Supermarket chains	143	37.2



	purchase	Farm shop	125	32.6
		Organic shops	116	30.2
		TOTAL	384	100.0
7	Mode of Payment	Cash	102	26.6
		Debit Card	105	27.3
		Credit Card	88	22.9
		Mobile App	89	23.2
		TOTAL	384	100.0

Source: Primary Data

In this present analysis, a total of 384 sample respondents at kanniyakumari district who associated with organic food practices were selected, of whom, 197 (51.3 per cent) respondents were male and 187 (48.7 per cent) respondents were female. Based on Occupation, 132 (34.4 per cent) respondents were Employees, 143 (37.3 per cent) respondents were businessman and 109 (28.3 per cent) respondents were professionals. Based on Location, 72 (18.8 per cent) respondents belongs to rural area, 150 (39.1 per cent) respondents belongs to semi-urban area and 162 (42.2per cent) of the respondents belongs to urban area. On the basis of Taluk, 114 (29.7 per cent) respondents belongs to Kalkulam Taluk, 149 (38.8 per cent) respondents belongs to Thovalai Taluk and 121 (31.5 per cent) belongs to Thiruvattar taluk. On the basis of Income group, nearly 262 (68.2 per cent) comes under Middle Income group and 122 (31.8 per cent) comes under High Income

group. On the basis of Source of purchase, 143 (37.2 per cent) respondents uses Supermarket chains, 125 (32.6 per cent) respondents uses Farm shops and 116 (30.2 per cent) uses Organic shops. According to Mode of payment, 102 (26.6 per cent) respondents pays cash directly, 105 (27.3 per cent) respondents use Debit Card as their mode pf payment, 88 (22.9 per cent) respondents uses Credit card as their mode of payment and 89 (23.2 per cent) respondents uses various Mobile Apps as their mode of payment.

CHALLENGES AND ISSUES FACED BY CONSUMERS ON ORGANIC FOOD

Organic foods are an irreplaceable part of our daily life. It is evident that the utilization of organic food is highly beneficial in terms of numerous aspects. However, it is undeniable that organic foods have several disadvantages. The challenges and issues faced by consumers on organic food has been analyzed using Garrett Ranking techniques.

**TABLE NO.2
 CHALLENGES & ISSUES FACED BY CONSUMERS**

SI.NO	CHALLENGES & ISSUES	GARRETT MEAN SCORE	RANK
1	High Cost	72.88	I
2	Non availability of organic products in many locations	70.67	II
3	Limited choice of products	63.28	V
4	High bacterial levels	55.98	VIII
5	Fewer nutritional items	60.91	VI



6	Uncertified organic foods	58.84	VII
7	Health risk if production is not optimized	66.87	IV
8	Shorter shelf life than other items	68.24	III

Source: Primary Data

From the above table, the study clarifies that the most faced issues faced by consumers is 'High Cost' since it has the highest mean score of 72.88, followed by 'Non availability of organic products in many locations' with a mean score of 70.67. The third most problem faced consumer was 'Shorter shelf life than other items' with a mean score of 68.24. 'Health risk if production is not optimized' was ranked fourth, since its mean score is 66.87, followed by 'limited choice of products' with a mean score of 63.28. The sixth most challenge faced by consumer was 'Fewer nutritional items' with

a mean score of 60.91, followed by 'Uncertified organic foods' with a mean score of 58.84. The problems which was considered at last was 'High bacterial levels' with a mean score of 55.98.

CHALLENGES AND ISSUES FACED BY CONSUMERS ON ORGANIC FOOD

Characteristics of male and female very significantly, considering this an attempt to analyze whether there is any significant difference male and female consumers regarding their challenges and issues on organic food using T- statistics.

**TABLE NO.3
 CHALLENGES AND ISSUES FACED BY CONSUMERS**

SI. NO	CHALLENGES & ISSUES	GENDER		t-value	P Value
		MALE	FEMALE		
1	High Cost	2.854	3.010	5.381	0.021*
2	Non availability of organic food in many locations	2.747	2.713	8.773	0.003*
3	Limited choice of products	2.747	2.752	0.010	.921
4	High bacterial levels	3.543	3.701	5.381	0.002*
5	Few nutritional value	3.572	3.762	8.773	0.008*
6	Uncertified organic foods	3.796	3.711	2.279	.133
7	Health risk if production is not optimized	3.504	3.546	0.564	.454
8	Shorter shelf life than other items	3.514	3.690	1.058	0.003*

Source: Primary Data

Significant level@ 5%

The problem which has been faced by majority of consumers among male is 'Uncertified organic foods', 'few nutritional value' and 'High bacterial levels', since their mean scores are 3.796, 3.572 and 3.543. The problem which has been faced by majority of consumers among

female is 'Few nutritional value', 'Uncertified organic foods', 'High bacterial levels', since their mean scores are 3.762, 3.711 and 3.701.

Regarding the problems of male and female consumer's towards organic food, the significant difference has been identified in case



of 'High Cost', 'Non availability of organic foods in many locations', 'High bacterial levels', 'Few nutritional value' and 'Shorter shelf life than other items', since their T statistics was significant at 5% level.

SUGGESTIONS

- Higher cost was considered as the major issue faced by consumers on organic foods. Therefore, it was suggested to reduce the market price of organic foods by lowering its cost through different channels of production and distribution.
- Every region and common places in kanniya kumari district requires the launching of organic food and product stores. This will increase the awareness level of the new buyers and improve their attitude for the consumption of organic foods.
- For the shorter shelf life of foods, the manufacturers should clearly state in the labelling the date of production, the date of arrival and any risk specific to the ingredient type. With a "first in, first out" policy, manufacturer better equipped to battle the clock and deliver organic food products that are safe and appealing.
- The government should introduce the proper mechanism for the advancement of organic farming. This development will strengthen the exports of your country. The foreign world has more demands of organic foods; if we can provide pure, fresh and healthy organic food then your country will get more benefits in the form of development in the economy. The

government should set up a research institute for the proper advancement of organic seeds, fruits and their nutrient needs.

CONCLUSION

Consumers' interest in organic food has exhibited continued growth for the past twodecades, which has attracted entrepreneurs and corporations seeing a big potential for this industry. Consumers perceived organic food contain health benefits contribute as an important attributes in this study. Most respondent among buyers of organic food believed that organic food is healthier compared to conventional grown food. This is consistent with study that discovered health and the natural content of food have been found to be essential in food choices of organic consumers. In this study respondents also perceived the major challenge faced by them was High cost, Non availability of stores and much more. It was suggested to overcome the challenges of the market and take advantages of the emerging opportunities.

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