

Consumer Satisfaction towards Organic Food Products - A Study with Special Reference to Erode City

***Dr.S.Kalaiselvi**

*Associate Professor & Head, PG Department of Commerce with CA, Vellalar College for Women, Thindal, Erode, Tamilnadu

Introduction

Organic foods are minimally processed to maintain the integrity of the food without artificial ingredients, preservatives or irradiation. Organic products are obtained by processes friendly to the environment, by cultivation techniques that consider both the attributes of the final product and the production methods. Processed foods which are high in saturated fats, sugar and sodium, and low in essential nutrients are not only responsible for over weight problems but have been also shown to be major contributors to a number of health problems including diabetes, high blood pressure and heart disease. To make things worse, there are also various artificial preservatives, flavor enhances and a number of other chemicals with dubious effects on health. On the other hand, unprocessed foods are not as healthy as they seem to be either because most of them are conventionally grown which means with the use of pesticides, chemical fertilizers, antibiotics, growth hormones and who knows what else. Fortunately, there is a safer and healthier alternative- organic food.

Organic foods are foods that are produced using methods 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. Organic foods were historically grown on small, family-run farms, limiting the sale of these goods to small grocery store and farmer's markets. Organic food advocates claim that organically grown foods are safer and more nutritious than foods raised through non organic methods such as pesticide and non organic fertilizer use, or antibiotic and hormone use. Many people don't trust these chemicals and don't want to put them into their bodies. Since virtually all non-organically produced foods contain residues of pesticides, fertilizers and other chemicals, the only way to avoid them is to buy organic foods. To be certified as organic, food products need to come from farms and processing plants that are certified as organic. The inspectors make sure that only organic methods are used and that the environment is not contaminated with pesticides, synthetic fertilizers or other non organic compounds.

The main idea of organic food production is avoidance of all non-organic farming methods which means that the use of pesticides, artificial fertilizers, antibiotics, growth hormones and similar things is strictly forbidden. Instead, organic food producers use all natural farming methods such as crop rotation, composting, companion planting, stimulating biodiversity, etc. As a result, organic products pose no risk of pesticide residues or presence of other potentially harmful chemicals. Organic food products are not allowed to contain any genetically modified ingredients nor artificial additives. Although conventionally grown food is claimed to be safe, absence of all non-natural ingredients makes organic food without a doubt healthier and safer choice because the long term effects of those "safe" doses of pesticides, preservatives and other chemicals remain unknown.

Statement of the Problem

The market for organic food products in India has emerged because of the lucrative export Potential available for the producers. Incidentally, in India, most of the organic produce is grown to be exported to the global market. The rest is sold at predetermined retail outlets. So, if the trend for organic products is growing among producers then, its benefits must naturally reach the local population of a country. This will also ensure that the food products are nutrient rich as processing required would be minimal from the point of origin and consumption. This study has been made to conduct survey among the consumers of organic products in Erode City. As environmental sustainability is an important issue, in this regard there is a need to study the organic products and also to review the role of organic products in the environment.

At this juncture, the following questions were probed by the researcher.

- ❖ To what extent the consumers are aware about the organic products in Erode City?
- ❖ To what extent the consumers are satisfied towards using organic products in the study area?

- ❖ What are the problems faced by the respondents while consuming the organic products?

Scope of the Study

This study attempts to gain knowledge about consumer's satisfaction towards organic food product consumption. With rising concern of health issues and food safety, many consumers have turned their site to organic food products. The increased consumers' interest in organic food has been attributed among others to the growing demand for food free from pesticides and chemical residues. Organic food promotes a balance of human, other living organisms and the nature. It also promotes no artificial preservatives and best maintain the originality of food. This prevents excess use of harmful ingredients and thereby ensures health.

Objectives of the Study

The study is subject to the following specific objectives

- To find the level of awareness in the usage of organic food products among the select respondents.
- To study the buying behavior of consumers towards organic food products.
- To analyze the satisfaction level of the consumers towards organic food products
- To identify the problems while using the organic food products
- To offer suggestions based on the findings.

Research Methodology

The word "METHOD" means "the mode a way of accomplishing an end". Research Methodology is the systematic, theoretical analysis of the methods applied to a field of study. It comprises the theoretical analysis of the body of methods and principles associated with a branch of knowledge. The process used to collect information and data for the purpose of making business decisions.

The methodology may include publication research, interview surveys and other research techniques, and could include both present and historical information. Any scientific approach should have a method or an outline to be followed to attain specific goals.

Sample size

Field survey techniques were employed to collect primary data from the 200 selected sample respondents in Erode city.

Area of study

The area covered for the study is Erode city only.

Source of data

For this study both primary data and secondary data has been used.

Primary data

The first-hand information, which is being collected by the researcher, is called primary data. In this study the primary data was collected through well-structured questionnaire.

Secondary data

Secondary data were collected from books, journals, magazines, newspapers and websites.

Statistical Tools Used For the Study

Questionnaire was the main and important tool for collection of the data. Hence, effort has been taken to construct the questionnaire in a systematic way as to include adequate and relevant questions to ensure the research objectives.

Data Analysis

The data collected from the primary source were arranged sequentially and tabulated in a systematic order in the master table.

Tools Used For Analysis

In order to analyze the data, various statistical tools were used in this study.

- Simple Percentage Analysis
- Chi-Square Analysis
- Factor Analysis
- Weighted Average score ranking analysis

Results and Discussions

Simple Percentage Analysis

- Majority (59%) of the respondents belong to the category of Female.
- Majority (41%) of the respondents belong to the age group of 21-30 years.
- Majority (57%) of the respondents are married.
- Majority (33%) of the respondents are at College level in Educational qualification.
- Majority (24%) of the respondents are Government Employees
- Majority (40%) of the respondents monthly income is Rs.20,001-Rs.40,000
- Majority (60%) of the respondents belonging to the category of Joint family.
- Majority (49%) of the respondents belong to the family size of 4 to 6 members in the family
- Majority of (47%) of the respondents are from Semi-urban areas.
- Majority (29%) of the respondents are aware of organic products through Newspapers & Magazines.
- Majority (39%) of the respondents were using organic food product for a period from 1 to 2 years.
- Majority (44%) of the respondents are consuming Milk and Dairy products.
- Majority (36%) of the respondents choose organic products for health aspects.
- Majority (39%) of the respondents were consuming organic food products once in a month.
- Majority (30%) of the respondents opine the price of organic food products as high.
- Majority (35%) of the respondents opine that organic food products are easily available.
- Majority (29%) of the respondents buy organic products in organic store.
- Majority (60%) of the respondents consider the organic food products as worthy to its price.

Chi-Square Analysis

- There is no significant relationship between the gender, type of family, no of members in the family, area of residence of the respondents and their level of awareness towards organic food products.
- There is a close significant relationship between the age, marital status, and educational qualification, monthly income, occupation of the respondents and their level of awareness towards organic food products.

Weighted Average Ranking

- It is found from the analysis that majority of the respondents' problem while using the organic food products are 'high price' and 'lack of market information'.

Factor Analysis

- It could be found from the factor analysis that the level of satisfaction of the respondents towards organic products in Erode district varied and it was classified into four categories. Consumer satisfaction towards organic products in the present study composes four factors namely, product design & its brand image, quality and price, product variety and packaging and availability of the product.

Suggestions

- The wholesalers and retailers may take steps to create more awareness about the organic food products and its benefits.
- The marketers may introduce some special offers to attract the organic food consumers and introduce luxurious shops and packages to cover all consumers.

- Government can increase the trend for consumption of organic foods by increasing public awareness through various programs and advertisements in TV and other channels and further come forward to provide subsidy for organic producers.
- Organic foods particularly fruits and vegetables are of highly quality, nutritious and taste better. The same can be maintained to hang on to current customers and focus on new customers by increasing the availability of the products.

Conclusion

Consumer satisfaction plays a major role towards organic food products. The marketers of organic food products need to be innovative and dynamic in order to compete with the changing purchase behavior in the organic food product market among consumers. The importance of organic food products was ignored for quite a long period. As a result of environmental sustainability, importance is shifted towards organic food products rather than conventional food products. The present research focused to examine the consumer awareness and satisfaction level towards organic food products in Erode city. The study brought out the fact that the people were well aware of images and availability, but not loyal entirely too organic food products in Erode city.

The marketing executives of organic food products must create promotions which are both realistic and moral and the product availability in terms of volume and variety are required to become successful in marketing organic food products. Knowledge and awareness about organic food products could affect attitudes and perceptions about the product and, ultimately, buying decisions of the consumers. Organic food products are most preferred and highly demanded. The commodities at present and the price of food products are higher than other traditional food products. But, quality characteristics affect consumers' preferences for organic food products; with the most important including health and nutritional value, taste and fresh and general appearance. Consumers' willingness to purchase is influenced by limited and erratic supply, higher price of the products and very limited access and information.

TABLE NO. 1

Chi-Square Test between Socio Economic Factor and Level of Awareness towards Organic Food Products

Factor	Degrees of freedom	Table Value	Calculated χ^2 Value	Level of Significance	Hypothesis Accepted / Rejected
Gender	2	5.99	1.345	5%	Accepted
Age	6	12.6	12.913	5%	Rejected
Marital Status	2	5.99	8.251	5%	Rejected
Educational Qualification	6	12.6	13.605	5%	Rejected
Occupation	8	15.5	16.019	5%	Rejected
Family Monthly Income	6	12.6	14.146	5%	Rejected
Type of Family	2	5.99	5.472	5%	Accepted
Number of Members in the Family	4	9.49	2.610	5%	Accepted
Area of Residence	4	9.49	9.168	5%	Accepted

TABLE NO. 2

Problems Faced While Using the Organic Food Products

Weight Rank score		8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	Total Score ($\sum WX$)	Weighted Average Score	Rank
Rank		I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII			
Factors												
High Price	x	36	35	30	21	15	12	35	16	1000	27.7	I
	wx	288	245	180	105	60	36	70	16			
Non-Availability of Product varieties	X	23	21	25	29	27	28	14	33	879	24.4	IV
	wx	184	147	150	145	108	84	28	33			
Non-Availability of Resources	X	13	20	20	24	41	24	30	28	808	22.4	VIII
	wx	104	140	120	120	164	72	60	28			
Poor after Sale Service	X	27	15	21	32	20	31	26	28	860	23.8	V
	wx	216	105	126	160	80	93	52	28			
Duplicate Products	X	25	18	24	23	23	27	31	29	849	23.5	VI
	wx	200	126	144	115	92	81	62	29			
Need of more Maintenance	X	12	29	30	19	22	27	34	27	838	23.2	VII
	wx	96	203	180	95	88	81	68	27			
Time Consuming	x	39	28	20	21	25	29	20	18	978	27.1	III
	wx	312	196	120	105	100	87	40	18			
Lack of market information	X	25	34	30	31	27	22	10	21	988	27.4	II
	wx	200	238	180	155	108	66	20	21			

TABLE NO. 3

Total Variance Explained

Component	Initial Eigen values			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	5.829	38.862	38.862	5.829	38.862	38.862	3.336	22.238	22.238
2	1.423	9.486	48.348	1.423	9.486	48.348	2.739	18.260	40.498
3	1.194	7.957	56.305	1.194	7.957	56.305	2.009	13.395	53.893
4	1.060	7.069	63.374	1.060	7.069	63.374	1.422	9.482	63.374
5	0.839	5.592	68.966						
6	0.782	5.214	74.180						
7	0.640	4.266	78.446						
8	0.598	3.987	82.433						
9	0.555	3.702	86.136						
10	0.490	3.268	89.404						
11	0.378	2.523	91.927						
12	0.348	2.321	94.248						
13	0.335	2.236	96.483						
14	0.275	1.834	98.318						
15	0.252	1.682	100.000						

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

TABLE NO. 4
Rotated Component Matrix

No.	Factors	Component			
		Product design and its brand image	Quality and price	Product variety and packaging	Eco friendliness and easy availability
1	Eco Friendliness				0.817
2	Easy Availability				0.643
3	Easy Handling		0.528		
4	Quality		0.717		
5	Availability in Different Quality		0.777		
6	Price		0.754		
7	Guarantee		0.623		
8	Packaging			0.799	
9	Durability			0.549	
10	Variety of Products			0.812	
11	Safety and Convenience	0.627			
12	After Sales Service	0.706			
13	Brand Image	0.746			
14	Product Design	0.755			
15	Customer Relationship Management	0.739			

Extraction Method : Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Method : Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

Rotation converged in 6 iterations.