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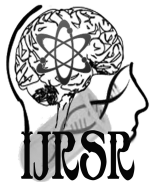
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RESEARCH ARTICLE

ASSESSMENT OF THE CONSUMER AWARENESS AND PREFERENCE TOWARDS ORGANIC VEGETABLES IN BELAGAVI DISTRICT OF KARNATAKA

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ABSTRACT

A study on assessment of the consumer awareness and preference towards organic vegetables in Belagavi district of Karnataka, The primary data were collected from 60 organic vegetable consumers through structured questionnaire method for the study. 90.00 per cent of the consumers expressed that organically grown vegetables protect the health followed by 81.67 per cent of the consumer opined that organically grown vegetable more taste than chemically grown vegetables. It was found that 86.67 per cent of the consumer opined that organically grown vegetables have long shelf life. Cent per cent of the consumers opined that the statement as organic vegetables are tastier. In case of the health benefit attribute, the four statements have been formed to ask with consumers. Majority 88.34 per cent of the consumers agreed that organic vegetables are safe food for children and sick person. Keeping quality or shelf life of the organic vegetables, 68.33 per cent of the consumers agreed that organic vegetables stay more fresh comparatively conventional vegetables. Factor influencing for purchasing of organic vegetables, consumers opined that healthy and hygienically produced was considered as the foremost factor (mean score of 74.56). Second important factor was good quality (mean score of 67.30) and third important factor was freshly available (mean score of 63.42). Good taste (mean score of 65.50). It was found that the problems faced by the consumers for purchasing the organic vegetables. 95.00 per cent of the consumer respondents faced the problem of insufficient quantity and non-availability of the organic vegetables followed by 93.34 per cent of the consumers faced the problem of low produce range of the vegetables.

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INTRODUCTION

Organic farming is a method of crop and livestock production that involves much more than choosing not to use pesticides, fertilizers, genetically modified organisms, antibiotics and growth hormones. Organic production is a holistic system designed to optimize the productivity and fitness of diverse communities within the agro-ecosystem, including soil organisms, plants, livestock and people. The principal goal of organic production is to develop enterprises that are sustainable and harmonious with the environment.

In the Planning Commission of India constituted in 2000, a steering group on agriculture identified organic farming as National challenge, and suggested it should be taken in the form of a project as major thrust area for Tenth Plan. The group recommended organic farming in North East Region, rain-fed areas and in the areas where the consumption of agro chemicals

is low or negligible. The National Agricultural Policy (2000) recommended promotion of traditional knowledge of agriculture relating to organic farming and its scientific upgradation. The Ministry of Commerce launched the National Organic Programme in April 2000 and Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA) is implementing the National Programme for Organic Production (NPOP). Under the NPOP, documents like National standards, accreditation criteria for accrediting inspection and certification agencies, Accreditation procedure, inspection and certification procedures have been prepared and approved by National Steering Committee (NSC). Under NPOP programme, the Government of India has developed National Standard for organic export. The Ministry of Agriculture, in principle, has accepted this standard for domestic purpose also. The scope of these standards is to lay down policies for development and certification of organic products; facilitate certification of organic products confirming the standards for organic production; institute a logo and

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prescribe its award by accrediting bodies on products qualifying for bearing “India organic label”

Consumers purchase organic vegetables for many different reasons. Many want to buy organic vegetables that are free of chemical pesticides or grown without conventional fertilizers. Some simply like to try new and different products. Product taste, concerns for the environment and the desire to avoid foods from genetically engineered organisms are among the many other reasons some consumers prefer to buy organic food products.

As the demand for organically produced farm products increased across the world, the need for setting standards and define guidelines has become essential. Codex issued the guidelines for organic farming in 1999. The UN-Organizations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the World Health Organization (WHO) as well as the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) started negotiations on standards on organic agriculture in the 1990s and adopted the first edition in 1999.

The concept of close contact between the consumer and the organic vegetable producer is a long established practice. Greater market demand, the increasing economic interests in production, and the increasing distance between producer and consumer has stimulated the introduction of external control and certification procedures. An integral component of certification is the inspection of the organic management system. Procedures for operator certification are based primarily on a yearly description of the agricultural enterprise as prepared by the operator in cooperation with the inspection body. Likewise, at the processing level, standards are also developed against which the processing operations and plant conditions can be inspected and verified. Where the inspection process is undertaken by the certification body or authority, there must be clear separation of the inspection and certification function. In order to maintain their integrity, certification bodies or authorities that certify the procedures of the operator should be independent of economic interests with regard to the certification of operators.

Review of Literature

Parichard S. (2012) reported study on consumer perceptions and attitudes of organic food products in Norther Thailand, the adoption of organic production and processing was highly determined by market demand. So that it reflected in consumer perception and attitude towards organic food products. Result indicated that the main reasons for purchasing organic food products were an expectation of a healthier and environment friendly means of production. Organic buyers tend to be older and higher educated than those who do not buy them. In addition, the main barrier to increase the market share of organic food products is consumer information.

Olsen, (1972) reported that consumers assess the quality of a product using either direct indicators (e.g., physical attributes) or indirect indicators (e.g., 12 product price). Given that most

direct indicators associated with credence goods are not often observable to the organic consumer, indirect cues or indicators (e.g., price) are used to signal product quality.

Hutchins and Greenhalgh (1997) noted some confusion among consumers in the UK, where one-third of respondents reported that they were aware of existing organic labels, yet some of such respondents did not recognize the symbol or logo of the organic food standards regulatory body in the country. Similar observations were reported for consumers in Greece.

Jolly *et al.* (1989) reported that respondents associated organic produce with no pesticides, no artificial fertilizer, no growth regulators, and residue-free products. Similarly, survey respondents in the UK perceived ‘organic farming’ to imply absence of chemicals, ‘absence of growth hormones’, and ‘not intensively grown’ or ‘products grown naturally’.

METHODOLOGY

Conventional vegetable farmer are now gradually shifting back to organic vegetable farming in India. It is believed by many that organic vegetables are healthier. Though the health benefits of organic vegetables are yet to be proved, consumers are willing to pay higher premium price for organic vegetables. Many farmers in India are shifting to organic vegetable farming due to the domestic and international demand for organic vegetables. The primary data were collected from 60 organic vegetable consumers through structured questionnaire method for the study in balagavi district of karnaka. Collected data were analyzed by using frequency and percentage of organic consumers.

In this background, the government framed and implementing several policies and programmes encouraging organic vegetable farming programme in place of conventional farming. At present there is no adequate and proper documentation for consumer awareness and preferences towards organic vegetables in Belagavi district of Karnataka. As such it is felt that “Assessment of The Consumer Awareness And Preference Towards Organic Vegetables In Belagavi District Of Karnataka” is most appropriate for the study.

Garret’s Ranking Technique

Garret’s Ranking Technique was adopted for studying the factors influencing consumer preference for organically grown vegetables Ranking given by 60 respondents for each factor was analyzed by. Eg: Rank given by the respondents

Table 1

Respondents No.	Factors									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1	3	7	4	8	2	6	3	5	10	1
2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
3	8	5	7	10	1	9	6	4	5	7

Thus assigned ranks by the individual respondents were counted into per cent position value by using the formula

$$\text{Percentage Position} = \frac{100 (R_{ij} - 0.5)}{N_j}$$

Where,

R_{ij}= Rank given for ith item by jth individual

N_j= Number of items ranked by jth individual

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Table 2 Consumer awareness of benefit for consuming organically grown vegetables (N=60)

Sl. No.	Items	Frequency of consumers	Percentage of consumers
1	Organically grown vegetables protect the health	54	90.00
2	Organically grown vegetables more taste than chemically grown vegetables	49	81.67
3	Organically grown vegetables have long shelf life	52	86.67
4	Organically grown vegetables have better quality	47	78.33
5	Organically grown vegetables are more nutritious than conventionally grown vegetables	51	85.00

Table 2 revealed that consumer awareness towards organic vegetables, 90.00 per cent of the consumers expressed that organically grown vegetables protect the health. 81.67 per cent of the consumer respondents expressed that organically grown vegetable more taste than chemically grown vegetables. It was found that 86.67 per cent of the consumer respondents expressed that organically grown vegetables have long shelf life. 78.33 per cent of the consumer respondents opined that organically grown vegetables have better quality. Finally 85.00 per cent of the consumer respondents opined that organically grown vegetables are more nutritious than conventionally grown vegetables.

statement as organic vegetables are tastier. In case of the health benefit attribute, the four statements have been formed to ask with consumers. Majority 88.34 per cent of the consumers agreed that organic vegetables are safe food for children and sick person. There were 10.00 per cent of consumers who did not agreed for the same and 1.66 per cent of the consumer was neutral in nature about this statement. The statement such as organic vegetables are more nutritious was agreed by 78.34 per cent of the consumer respondents and 21.66 per cent of the consumer respondents not agreed with this statement. Majority 75.00 per cent of the respondents told that there are health benefits in consumption of the organic food whereas 20.00 per cent of the consumer respondents expressed negative response for this statement and only 5.00 per cent of the consumers were neutral for this statement. 16.66 per cent of the respondents agreed for organic consumers fall sick often, 80.00 per cent of the consumer expressed negative about this statement only 3.34 per cent neutral about this statement.

According appearance of organic vegetables 26.66 per cent of the consumer respondents organic vegetables are larger than conventionally grown vegetables. There were 53.34 per cent of the consumers who did not agree for this statement and 20.00 per cent respondents were stood neutral for this particular statement. 28.33 per cent of the consumer respondents expressed that organic vegetables are less attractive than conventionally grown vegetables. 41.66 per cent of the consumer expressed negative about this statement and 30.00 per cent of the consumer neutral about this statement. Majority 98.34 per cent of the sample respondents agreed that organic

Table 3 Consumers’ preference towards organic vegetables (N = 60)

Sl. No.	Attributes	Statements	Yes		No		Neutral	
			F	%	F	%	F	%
1	Taste	Organic vegetables are more tastier	60	100.00	0	0.00	0	0.00
		It is safe food for children and sick	53	88.34	06	10.00	01	1.66
		It is more nutritious	47	78.34	13	21.66	0	0.00
2	Health benefit	There are health benefit in consumption of organic food	45	75.00	12	20.00	03	5.00
		Organic consumers fall sick often	10	16.66	48	80.00	02	3.34
		Organic vegetables are larger than convention	16	26.66	32	53.34	12	20.00
3	Appearance	It is less attractive than conventional produce	17	28.33	25	41.66	18	30.00
		It is eco friendly	59	98.34	01	1.66	0	0.00
4	Pesticide residue free	It is free from pesticide residue	55	91.67	05	8.33	0	0.00
		It is produced without using chemical fertilizers and pesticides	54	90.00	06	10.00	0	0.00
		It stays more fresh comparatively conventional produce	41	68.33	14	23.33	05	8.33
5	Shelf life	It can be stored for long period as compared to conventional	42	70.00	11	18.33	07	11.67
		Organic vegetable consumption is status of symbol	29	48.33	23	38.33	08	13.34
6	Status of symbol	Its high price confirms its high quality	27	45.00	20	33.33	13	21.67
		It is certified	49	81.67	09	15.00	02	3.33
7	Authenticity	Certification is a quality assurance for organic vegetables	41	68.33	11	18.33	08	13.34
8	Price	Price of organic vegetables are more compared to conventional vegetables	60	100.00	0	0.00	0	0.00

Table 3 revealed that the consumer’s preference towards organic vegetables for consumption. Some eight attributes which were identified as main attributes along with each attribute had its own sub attribute which were interviewed to the respondents. Taste was first among the attributes which was classified. Cent per cent of the consumers have given the

vegetables are ecofriendly, only 1.66 per cent of the respondent did not agree for this statement. 91.67 per cent of the consumers expressed that organic vegetables are free from pesticide residue, 8.33 per cent of the consumer respondents expressed negative about this statement. Majority 90.00 per cent of the consumer respondents expressed that the organic

vegetables are produced without using chemical fertilizers and pesticides, Whereas 10.00 per cent of the consumers did not agree with this statement.

Keeping quality or shelf life of the organic vegetables, 68.33 per cent of the consumers agreed that organic vegetables stay more fresh comparatively conventionally grown vegetables. 23.33 per cent of the consumer respondents who did not agreed with this statement followed by 8.33 per cent of the consumer respondents who were neutral for this statement. Majority 70.00 per cent of the consumer respondents agreed with the statement such as the organic vegetables can be stored for longer period as compared to conventionally grown vegetables. It was found that 18.33 per cent of the consumer respondents who did not agreed with this statement followed by 11.67 per cent of the respondents were neutral for this statement. It was found that 48.33 per cent of the respondents were expressed that organic vegetable consumption is status of symbol followed by 38.33 per cent of the consumer opined negative about the statement only 13.34 per cent of the respondents neutral about this statement. There were 45.00 per cent of consumer respondents agreed for the statement such as the high price of the organic vegetables confirms its high quality, followed by 33.33 per cent of the respondents expressed that negative statement, whereas 21.67 per cent of the respondents were neutral about this statement.

It was found that 81.67 per cent of the consumer respondents agreed that the organic vegetables are certified followed by 15.00 per cent of the consumer opined negative statement and 3.33 per cent of the consumers expressed about neutral statement. Majority 68.33 per cent of the consumers expressed that certification is a quality assurance for organic vegetables followed by 18.33 per cent respondents opined negative for this statement, only 13.34 per cent consumer respondents were neutral for this statement. It was found that cent per cent of the sample consumers agreed that price of organic vegetables are more compared to conventional vegetables.

Table 3 Factors influencing the purchasing of organic vegetables (N = 60)

Sl. No.	Factors	Garret score	Rank
1	Healthy and hygienically produced	74.56	I
2	Good quality	67.30	II
3	Freshly available	63.42	III
4	Good Taste	65.50	IV
5	Liked by the Family Members	50.78	V
6	Good service	48.14	VI
7	Influenced by Friends/Relatives	35.12	VII
8	Accessibility	37.63	VIII
9	Regular availability	31.54	IX
10	Promoted by Credit Sales	28.25	X

Consumers' purchasing decision of organic vegetables are depending on the influencing factors like price, packaging and quality etc. of that particular product. In the same way for the purpose of present study, there were some eight influencing factors of organic vegetables has been listed and asked the same with consumer respondents. Table 3 showed that the response of the consumers for the influencing factors of the organic vegetables. Respondents explicated preferring healthy and hygienically produced was considered as the foremost factor (mean score of 74.56). Second important factor was good

quality (mean score of 67.30) and third important factor was freshly available (mean score of 63.42). good taste (mean score of 65.50) followed by Liked by the family members (mean score of 50.78), good service (mean score of 48.14), influenced by friends/relatives (mean score of 35.12), accessibility (mean score of 37.63), regular availability (mean score of 31.54), promoted by credit sales (mean score of 28.25), in this ranking method healthy and hygienically produced was scores highest rank and promoted by credit sales scored least rank among all factors.

Table 4 Problems faced by the consumers for purchasing of organic vegetables (N = 60)

Sl. No.	Problems	Frequency	Percentage
1	Insufficient quantity and non availability of organic vegetables	57	95.00
2	Low produce range of organic vegetables	56	93.34
3	Lack of awareness for organic vegetables	21	35.00
4	Proximity outlet of organic vegetables	54	90.00

Table 4 revealed that the problems faced by the consumers for purchasing the organic vegetables. 95.00 per cent of the consumer respondents faced the problem of insufficient quantity and non-availability of the organic vegetables followed by 93.34 per cent of the consumers faced the problem of low produce range of the organic vegetables. It was found that 35.00 per cent of the sample consumers expressed that lack of awareness about organic vegetables. It was found that 90.00 per cent of the consumer respondents expressed the problem of proximity outlets for the organic vegetables.

CONCLUSION

Consumer preference for organic vegetables is based on a general perception that organic vegetable farming has more desirable characteristics than conventionally-grown vegetables. Human health, food safety and environmental stewardship, along with several other product characteristics such as nutritive value, taste, freshness, appearance, and other sensory characteristics influence consumer preferences. Consumer willingness-to-pay for organic vegetables versus conventionally-grown vegetables reflect not only an observation that individuals make trade-offs between attributes associated with consuming alternative products, but also an observation that individual consumer preferences are unique. Given that yields from organic vegetable production are generally lower than under conventionally grown vegetables, consumers are willingness to pay a premium price for organic vegetables.

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