SHORT COMMUNICATION

CONSTRAINTS FACED BY THE CONSUMERS IN PURCHASING ORGANIC VEGETABLES IN THRISSUR CORPORATION OF KERALA

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Abstract: This study is aimed to assess the constraints faced by consumers in purchasing organic vegetables. The present study was conducted in Thrissur Corporation of Kerala and primary data was collected through personal interview from 200 consumers. Collected data was analysed using Garret ranking technique. Unavailability of organic vegetables and poor range of varieties in the available organic vegetables, lack of advertisements and distance to the shops were identified as the major constraints faced by the consumers in purchasing organic vegetables. The findings will help policy makers to develop suitable strategies effectively by targeting the consumers' choices and understanding the barriers.

Keywords: Constraints, Garret ranking, Organic vegetables

INTRODUCTION

India ranks 8th in terms of World's Organic Agricultural land and 1st in terms of total number of producers as per 2020 data. India with 0.57 million ha is placed at 15th among the countries with largest area under organic agriculture hectares. Organic Farming is showing a positive growth trend in the country and the organic food market in India is estimated to be growing at a 25-30 per cent, mainly due to lower base. The major factors attracting public and private attention include; increasing prospects of organic agribusiness trade because of increasing demand for safe food and an approach to sustainable development of farming. Similar situation prevails in Kerala also, where there appears to be a strong demand for organic food. With rise in income levels, greater health consciousness and environment friendly attitude motivates people to prefer organic produce. At the same time organic production is more labour intensive than conventional production and the use of other organic inputs is also more costly (Boys, Willis, & Carpio, 2014). Production in small scale is also responsible for higher cost of production. Organic production results in greater produce losses to diseases and insects (Govindasamy, DeCongelio, & Bhuyan, 2008). Due to such reasons farmers are reluctant to shift to organic farming. This creates an imbalance in supply and demand of the organic produce. High cost of production leads to higher prices of the organic produce which can affect the consumers' demand. There are various other barriers in the marketing of organic produce especially in developing countries like India where organic market is still in its infant stage. As vegetables constitute a major portion of food consumption of people, changes has undergone in the nature, type and quality of vegetables consumed by them. Now a day's vegetables are used not only to add their food habit but to provide nutrient and prevent nutritious related diseases and improves physical and mental well being of consumers. So this study attempts to identify the major constraints faced by the consumers in purchasing organic vegetables which will help in mitigating the existing problems in the organic vegetable marketing.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Purposive sampling method was used for selecting the respondents. Thrissur Corporation was purposively selected as it is one of the corporations having the highest number of functional eco shops among the six Corporations in Kerala. All the four functioning eco shops in the Thrissur Corporation area were selected for the study and 50 consumers from each eco shops were selected making the total sample size 200. Primary data from consumers was collected through a pre-tested and well structured schedule by the interview and recall method. Garrett's Ranking Technique was employed to identify the major constraints faced by the consumers in purchasing organic vegetables.

Garrett's ranking technique

Constraints faced by the consumers were ranked using Garrett's ranking technique. Some major prevailing constraints highlighted during preliminary survey were arranged in ascending order and were ranked. Accordingly, these ranks were converted to scores by referring to Garrett's table. Garrett's formula for converting ranks into percent is given by:

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$$\text{Percent position} = \frac{100 * (R_{ij} - 0.50)}{N_j}$$

Where,
R_{ij} = Rank given for i^{th} item by j^{th} stakeholder
N_j = Number of items ranked by j^{th} stakeholder
0.5 subtracted from R_{ij} as rank is an interval on a scale and its midpoint best represents an interval.
The constraint for which the highest score value was considered the most important problem faced by the consumer.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Socio economic characteristics of the consumers

Socio economic status is the measure of economic and social aspects of the individuals. Some of the most commonly used socio economic characters such ss age, gender, education and monthly income, occupational status, family size and residential area of the sample respondents were analysed and the results are presented in Table. 1. It can be observed from the Table 1 that majority of the respondents were in the age group of 40-60 years (87.5 percent of the total consumers) followed by age group of <40 years (6.5 percent) and age group of above 60 years. 58% of the sample consumers were male respondents and 42% were females. Majority of the consumers had a Bachelor's degree (47 %) followed by Master's degree (25 %), intermediate (19%) and high school (9%). 49% of the respondents were employed in private institutions, followed by government employees (22%), self employed (15%) and house maker (14%). 56 per cent of the consumers were having a monthly income between ₹50000-100000, followed by above ₹100000 (39%) and less than ₹50000 (5%). The majority of the consumers (77%) belonged to small family with 3-5 members, followed by less than 3 members (17%) and above five members (5%) and most of the respondents (64%) belonged to Thrissur Corporation.

Table 1. Socio economic characteristics of the consumers (N = 200)

Factor	Options	Frequency	Percentage
AGE	<40	13	6.5
	40-60	175	87.5
	>60	12	6
GENDER	Male	116	58
	Female	84	42
EDUCATION	High school	18	9
	Intermediate	38	19
	Graduate	94	47
	Postgraduate and above	50	25
MONTHLY INCOME	<50000	11	5.5
	50000-100000	112	56
	>100000	77	38.5
OCCUPATIONAL STATUS	self employed	30	15
	govt employee	44	22
	private employee	98	49
	house maker	28	14
FAMILY SIZE	<3	35	17.5
	3-5	154	77
	>5	11	5.5
RESIDENTIAL AREA	Within Thrissur corporation	128	64
	Outside Thrissur corporation	72	36

Constraints faced by consumers in purchasing organic vegetables

The major constraints faced by the consumers in purchasing organic vegetables were ranked using

Garrett ranking technique and the results are presented in Table 2. From the Table 2 it can be seen that major constraints faced by the consumers were unavailability of organic vegetables, poor range of varieties in the organic vegetables, lack of advertisements of organic vegetables and distance to the eco shops are the important barriers that occupied the first 4 positions. Quantity and variety of vegetables available in eco shops are limited because they procure from the marginal and local farmers. It was difficult for the non residents of Thrissur Corporation to approach eco shops since most of the shops were concentrated in the corporation area. Lack of adequate advertisements on the eco shops also prevented more number of consumers from buying organic vegetables. Less attractiveness of organic vegetables, less durability, lack of door delivery in the eco shops and lack of certification were the other constraints mentioned by the consumers. Lack of certification didn't bother the consumers as in eco shops the locally grown organic vegetables were sold without certification. The results corroborated with the findings of Mishra & Kaushik (2013) and Nandi *et al*. (2017).

Table 2. Constraints faced by consumers in purchasing organic vegetables

Constraints	Rank
Unavailability	1
Poor range of varieties in the organic vegetables	2
Lack of advertisements	3
Distance to eco shops	4
Less attractive	5
Less durable	6
Lack of door delivery	7
Lack of certification	8

CONCLUSION

The major constraints faced by the consumers in purchasing organic vegetables were unavailability, poor range of varieties in the available organic vegetables, lack of advertisements and distance to the eco shops. Establishment of more number of eco shops and promoting organic agriculture among local farmers will help in extending procurement and will increase the availability of organic vegetables. Making people aware about the existence of eco shops will attract more consumers. The thorough analysis of the constraints will help in developing suitable strategies which would mitigate the problems faced by the organic vegetable consumers and thereby to improve the marketing and consumption of organic vegetables.

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