

Factor Analysis of Consumer's Awareness and Attitudes towards Organic Products: Case Study of Maharagama Urban Council

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Compared to the western countries, the consumption of organic food products is low in Sri Lanka. However, in overall, organic food consumption has steadily increased over the years. This study investigates the consumer's preferences towards organic food products. The objective of the research is to find the main contributory factors of organic food consumption of super market customers. The data were collected from 108 super market customers who regularly visit four leading super markets in Maharagama Urban Council. A principal component factor analysis using SPSS was conducted to determine the underlying dimensions among 16 variables. The Barlett test of Sphericity was significant. (Chi-square=676.804, $p < 0.000$). The KMO overall measure of sampling was 0.77, indicating that data were suitable for the Principal Component Analysis. The analysis with Varimax rotation of the variables resulted in four factor solution that explains 62.8% of the total variance. Four factors were identified and named as: Sustainable Food Consumption, Natural Attributes, Extrinsic Attributes and Social Attributes. All four factors had eigenvalues greater than 1. Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient was computed to evaluate the internal consistency of each component. The overall reliability of the 16 variables was 0.813. Each factor had reliability coefficient ranging higher than 0.6. The results indicated that the sustainable food consumption component has a high importance of the buying decision process. This attribute focused on preservation of natural resources, greenhouse effect, bio diversity and environmental friendliness. Natural attributes make a considerable impact on buying process of organic food. This factor involved characteristics that focus on the absence of artificial ingredients such as chemicals and preservatives. Further Extrinsic attributes, such as packaging and branding regarded as having to play a major role in consumer buying process. However, 'social attributes' which concerned about consumer impression of waste of money and genetically modified food could be removed from the further analysis due to lack of consistency of reliability coefficient.

Keywords: consumer preference; factor analyses; organic
