

UNDERSTANDING CONSUMER TRENDS IN FARM-TO-FORK MODEL FOOD PRODUCTS WITHIN THE DELHI NCR REGION

Akash S Nair¹

¹Bsc. (Hons.) Agriculture, Amity Institute Of Organic Agriculture, Amity University, Noida, India.

ABSTRACT

This research explores consumer trends in the farm-to-fork food sector within the Delhi NCR region, based on an internship experience with Simply Naturals. The study focuses on GI-tagged products such as honey, grains, pulses, atta, and snacks. Data were gathered through direct sales and field surveys, involving interactions with consumers about their purchasing behaviors and preferences. Findings indicate that individuals aged 25-45, particularly from higher-income and education brackets, show a strong preference for these products due to health benefits, quality, and environmental sustainability. Major challenges include high costs, limited accessibility, and lack of awareness. To enhance market adoption, strategies such as cost reduction, targeted awareness campaigns, and improved distribution networks are recommended. This study provides insights for stakeholders to promote farm-to-fork food products in urban India.

Keywords- Farm-to-Fork Model, Consumer Behavior, Delhi NCR Region, Geographical Indication (GI)-Tagged Products, Health Benefits, Sustainability, Local Food Systems, Quality Assurance, Consumer Preferences, Market Penetration Barriers, Cost Analysis, Accessibility Issues, Distribution Network, Environmental Impact, Consumer Awareness, Simply Naturals.

1. INTRODUCTION

The retail industry in India, particularly in urban regions like Delhi NCR, has witnessed significant transformation and growth over recent years. This sector now features a diverse mix of traditional retail outlets, modern supermarkets, and increasingly popular e-commerce platforms. Consumers today have a wide array of food products at their disposal, ranging from conventional groceries to premium organic options. However, this proliferation of choices has also brought to light several critical issues. Concerns about food quality, safety, and the environmental impact of long and complex supply chains have become more pronounced. Consumers are increasingly aware of the potential health risks posed by pesticide residues and chemical preservatives commonly found in mass-produced food items. Additionally, the environmental footprint associated with the transportation and storage of these products is a growing concern. Thus, while the retail market offers convenience and variety, it is also facing scrutiny over its sustainability and ethical practices. In response to the mounting concerns about food quality, safety, and environmental sustainability, the farm-to-fork model has emerged as a viable and promising alternative. This model emphasizes the direct sourcing of food products from local farms to consumers, effectively minimizing the role of intermediaries. By doing so, it ensures that consumers receive fresher and more nutritious produce, often harvested at peak ripeness and delivered without the extensive processing and storage that can degrade quality. The farm-to-fork model also promotes environmental sustainability by significantly reducing the carbon footprint associated with food transportation and storage. Additionally, it supports local farmers and rural economies by providing them with direct access to urban markets, thereby enhancing their income and livelihoods. For urban consumers in regions like Delhi NCR, the farm-to-fork approach meets a growing demand for transparency, traceability, and ethical consumption. This model not only aligns with the health and environmental priorities of discerning consumers but also fosters a more sustainable and equitable food system. As such, it represents a critical evolution in the retail food industry, addressing contemporary consumer concerns while promoting long-term sustainability.

The farm-to-fork model has become increasingly popular as consumers seek fresher, healthier, and more sustainable food options. This model involves sourcing food directly from local farms to consumers, minimizing the supply chain to ensure product freshness and quality.

In urban areas like the Delhi NCR region, there is a growing interest in these products, driven by health consciousness and environmental concerns. This research aims to understand the current trends in consumer behavior regarding farm-to-fork food products in the Delhi NCR region. The study is based on fieldwork conducted during an internship with Simply Naturals, a company specializing in GI-tagged food products such as honey, grains, pulses, atta, and snacks. By interacting directly with consumers and conducting surveys, this study seeks to identify the motivations, preferences, and challenges faced by consumers in this market.

2. METHODOLOGY

The research employed a mixed-method approach, combining quantitative data from surveys with qualitative insights from direct consumer interactions and observations during sales activities. The primary data collection methods included:

Surveys: Conducted with 500 consumers in the Delhi NCR region to gather information on purchasing habits, preferences, and demographics.

Interviews and Observations: In-depth interviews with 20 consumers and direct observations during sales interactions provided qualitative insights into consumer motivations and challenges.

3. RESULTS

Demographic Analysis

The primary consumers of farm-to-fork products in the Delhi NCR region are aged between 25-45, with a significant concentration in the 30-40 age bracket. These consumers are typically from higher-income groups and possess higher education levels, indicating an informed preference for quality and health benefits.

Consumer Preferences and Purchasing Behaviors

Health and Quality: 70% of respondents cited health benefits as their primary motivation for choosing farm-to-fork products. Consumers perceive these products as fresher and of higher quality compared to conventional alternatives.

Environmental Impact: 55% of consumers are motivated by the environmental benefits, preferring products with lower carbon footprints and sustainable farming practices.

Purchase Channels: Online platforms and local farmers' markets are the preferred channels, with 60% of respondents favoring direct purchases from farmers or dedicated online marketplaces.

Frequency: 45% of consumers purchase farm-to-fork products weekly, while 35% do so monthly.

Motivations

Health Consciousness: Increased awareness of food-related health issues has led consumers to seek fresher, chemical-free produce.

Support for Local Farmers: Many consumers are driven by the desire to support local agriculture and the economy.

Traceability: The ability to trace the origin of food products provides consumers with assurance regarding quality and safety.

Challenges

Cost: Higher prices of farm-to-fork products are a significant barrier, especially for middle and lower-income groups.

Accessibility: Limited availability and distribution channels pose challenges, particularly for consumers in non-central areas of Delhi NCR.

Awareness: Despite growing interest, there remains a segment of the population that lacks awareness about the benefits of farm-to-fork products.

Market Analysis

The farm-to-fork market in Delhi NCR is expanding, with several new ventures and platforms emerging. Companies are increasingly focusing on creating robust supply chains that connect local farmers directly with urban consumers. The market is characterized by a diverse range of products, including fresh produce, dairy, and meat.

Discussion

Consumer Insights

The findings indicate that there is a strong preference for farm-to-fork products among urban consumers in the Delhi NCR region, driven by health, quality, and environmental considerations. However, the higher cost and limited accessibility of these products remain significant barriers to broader adoption.

Strategic Recommendations

To enhance the adoption and market penetration of farm-to-fork products, several strategic initiatives are recommended:

Price Reduction Strategies: Implementing economies of scale and seeking government subsidies can help reduce costs and make farm-to-fork products more accessible to a broader audience.

Awareness Campaigns: Educating consumers about the benefits of farm-to-fork products through targeted marketing and public health campaigns can increase awareness and demand.

Improved Distribution Networks: Expanding distribution channels to include more physical stores and efficient online delivery systems can improve accessibility for all consumer segments.

4. CONCLUSION

The farm-to-fork model holds significant promise in the Delhi NCR region, driven by consumer demand for healthier, high-quality, and environmentally sustainable food products. Addressing cost and accessibility challenges is crucial for achieving broader market penetration. This study provides valuable insights for stakeholders and policymakers aiming to enhance the adoption and success of farm-to-fork food products in urban India.

5. REFERENCES

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