



Whither goes the Lifestyle Notions of Green Consumers in Kerala after the COVID-19 Scenario?

Dr. Rahul Ramesh

¹Assistant Professor, PG Department of Commerce, Sree Sankara College, Kalady, Ernakulam, Kerala

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ABSTRACT: The Green products market of Kerala has been gaining wide popularity due to high literacy rate and high health consciousness of the people. This has led to an increased demand for Green products, and has become more prominent, especially after the COVID-19 pandemic situation which once persisted in the State. Organic foods and Green products have been assuming great relevance and popularity and people have started moving through the path of self-sustainability attributable to their great concern and increased consciousness for health after the COVID-19 scenario. The COVID-19 scenario has made a sudden paradigm shift from the ready-to-eat and ready-to-cook items to home-made and healthy indigenous food products, which is visible in the activities of the people from all walks of life, in the State. This paper tries to analyse the extent of influence of some important demographic factors influencing the buying decisions of Green Consumers in the State of Kerala and probes into the underlying reasons/factors behind the changing lifestyle notions of Keralites. The study points out that the factors like age, average monthly income, educational status, size of the family and fear factors have profound influence on the green purchase decisions of the consumers in Kerala after the COVID-19 scenario.

KEYWORDS: *Green Foods, Green Products, Keralites, COVID-19, Lifestyle Notions, Pandemic-stricken economic disequilibrium, Post-Covid scenario, New Normal style of living*

I. INTRODUCTION

The State of Kerala is well known all over the world for its high literacy rates, low infant mortality and high life expectancy rates. According to the Census Survey report 2011, the Male and Female Literacy rates in Kerala is 96.02 and 91.98 percent respectively, compared to 82.14 and 65.46 percent in India. The overall Adult literacy rate is 94 percent as compared to India's 74 and US's 99 [1] [2] [3] [4]. Life expectancy in Kerala is 74.9

years compared to 69 years in India, 79 years in the US, 81.26 years in Germany, 84.55 years in Japan and 76.79 years in China. Green Consumerism has been gaining wide popularity in the state of Kerala, irrespective of the gender, level of income and the size of family.

Environmental consciousness has been a subject of debate all over the world, including India. Various health hazards and spread of diseases like Dengue Fever, Nipah virus disease (NiV), Kyasanur Forest Disease (KFD) or monkey fever, and lately, the COVID-19 pandemic which has been looming over the state of Kerala, has made the people to adopt a 'New Normal' style of living, making a drastic paradigm shift in the styles of living of the people from all walks of life in the State. In this context, it becomes quite relevant to make a probe into the underlying reasons/factors behind the changing lifestyle notions of Keralites.

Demographic, socio-economic, psychological, cultural and geographical features make the State distinct from other states. The pattern of consumption of Keralites has made many manufacturers of food and allied items towards Kerala as a prime centre of their lucrative business activities. But during the second quarter of 2020, even the sale of essential commodities in Kerala suffered a dip amid the COVID-19 pandemic. QRS Retail Ltd. Director Mr. Muralidharan S., opined that "Depressed consumer demand remains another key issue traders have to tackle with after lockdown. Consumers would not rush to a store and buy non-essential items immediately after lockdown. They would be cautious while spending from their already slim wallets" [5].

The corona virus pandemic has been devastating for foreign workers everywhere. The COVID-19 pandemic has also been depleting the flow of money from abroad to the State of Kerala, the economy of which was predominantly relying on Gulf remittances for almost its economic activities compared to all other Indian states. The State also has been providing livelihood to 4.34 lakh guest workers, as per the statistics published by the State Labour Department of Kerala. Out of these workers, almost 58 per cent had returned to their home states



making many industrial and construction work in the State to a doldrum [6].

Later, the pandemic piked again, in Kerala as well as across India. The plight of Keralites who have lost their livelihoods in the gulf countries and the mental agony of their families also aggravates the intensity of the changing pattern of consumption of the people of Kerala. The pandemic-stricken economic disequilibrium of the State, which still prevails, makes a study probing into the reasons behind the drastic changes in the lifestyles and buying behaviour of the Keralites after this period, an inevitable one. Hence a study analysing the demographic factors affecting the buying decisions of Green Consumers in Kerala after the COVID-19 scenario is highly imperative in this context.

II. RELEVANCE OF THE STUDY

The Green products market of Kerala has been gaining wide popularity due to high literacy rate and high health consciousness of the people. This has led to an increased demand for Green products, and has become more prominent, especially after the COVID-19 pandemic situation that once prevailed in the State. Organic foods and Green products have been assuming great relevance and popularity, and people have started moving through the path of self-sustainability attributable to their great concern and increased consciousness for health after the COVID-19 scenario. The COVID-19 scenario has made a sudden paradigm shift from the ready-to-eat and ready-to-cook items to home-made and healthy indigenous food products, which is visible in the activities of the people from all walks of life, in the State. In this context, a study analyzing the factors behind the drastic shifts in the lifestyle of the people of Kerala due to the COVID-19 scenario becomes quite relevant.

III. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The State of Kerala has been emerging fast as a potential market for Green Products owing to the high level of literacy, followed by higher levels of health consciousness and environmental awareness among all the strata of the society. Emergence of green stores and outlets in almost all the districts of Kerala is an indication of the growing demand for green and eco-friendly products in the State. Hence, a study analyzing the extent of influence of demographic factors that influence the purchase decisions of the Green Consumers in Kerala becomes quite significant in this context.

IV. OBJECTIVES

- To analyse the changes in the consumption pattern of Green Products after the COVID-19 pandemic in Kerala.
- To analyse various factors influencing green buying decisions of the consumers after the COVID-19 pandemic.
- To analyse whether any paradigm shift has taken place in the lifestyles of the consumers after the COVID-19 pandemic.
- To examine the association among the lifestyles and preferences with the demographic and socio-economic profile of the households.

V. HYPOTHESES

- H₀₁:** Lifestyle has not become healthier after COVID-19 scenario irrespective of their Age.
- H₀₂:** The healthier Lifestyle of the consumers after the COVID-19 scenario has not decreased common diseases irrespective of their Age.
- H₀₃:** Average Monthly Income has no positive influence on the green buying behaviour.
- H₀₄:** Influence of price on the green purchase decision of the people has no positive association with their Average Monthly Income.
- H₀₅:** Education has not influenced the decision making due to fear factor.
- H₀₆:** People turning toward green products after COVID-19 scenario and their Educational Status has no positive association.
- H₀₇:** The decision to buy more online rather than store purchase is not influenced by Education.
- H₀₈:** Age of the people has no positive influence on their choice for frequently resorting to online payment methods.
- H₀₉:** Size of the family has no significant influence on people who think that much of the money spent for social gatherings is unnecessary.

VI. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study is an empirical one mainly based on primary data. Primary data required for the study have been collected by means of an online survey among 15 Cities and Urban Agglomerations in Kerala. Convenience Sampling Technique was adopted by selecting 10 Respondents each from 15 Major Cities and Urban Agglomerations of Kerala based on population. Altogether 150 respondents were selected for the purpose of the study.



VII. TOOLS OF ANALYSIS

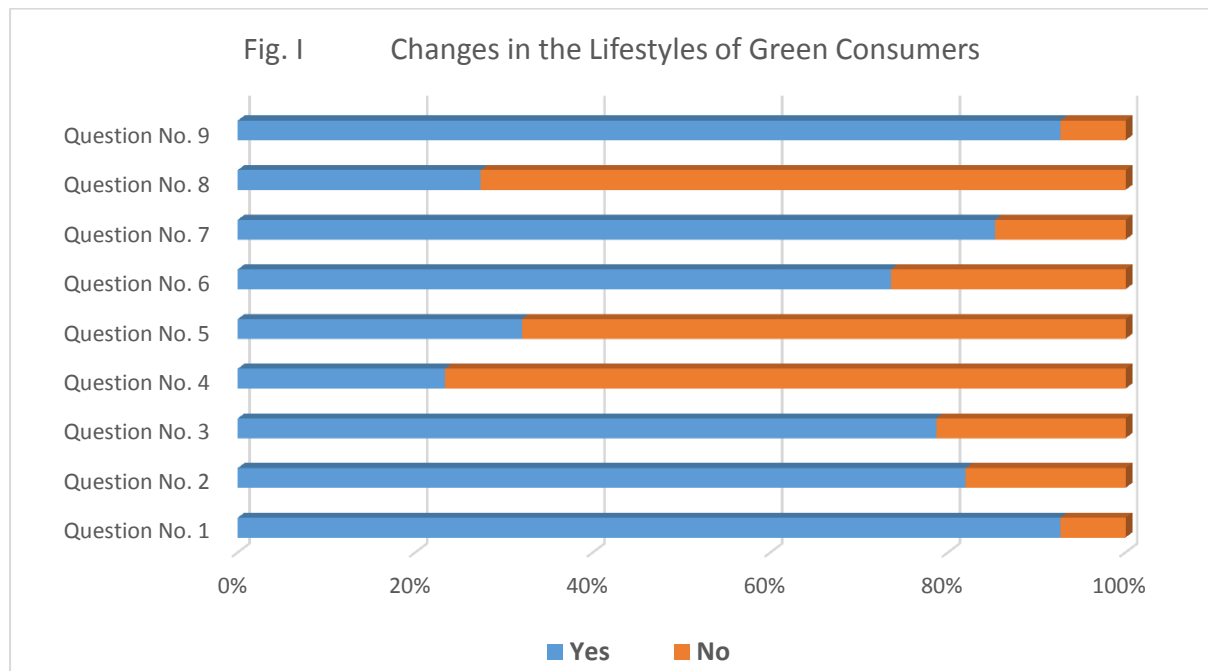
Chi Square Test was adopted to test whether there exists a positive association among various demographic factors such as age, gender,

educational qualification and size of the family, and other factors, influencing the green purchase decision of consumers in the study area.

Table No. I Opinions of the Consumers regarding the paradigm shifts in their lifestyles after COVID-19 scenario

Question No.	Questions	Yes (% to Total)	No (% to Total)
1	Even though the COVID-19 Scenario has made life difficult, it has made my lifestyle much healthier.	92.67	7.33
2	Even though the COVID-19 Scenario has made life difficult, common diseases have relatively decreased due to a better lifestyle of the people.	82	18
3	I used to buy green products amidst the COVID-19 Scenario.	78.67	21.33
4	The price of the green products influence my buying behaviour.	23.33	76.67
5	Fear factor influence me in buying green products.	32	68
6	More people has turned towards green product purchasing due to the COVID-19 Scenario.	68.67	24.67
7	COVID-19 Scenario made me opt to buy online rather than store purchase.	85.33	14.67
8	The COVID-19 Scenario has made me to use online methods of payment more often.	27.33	72.67
9	I think that the COVID-19 Scenario has made people realise that much of the money spent for social functions like marriage, birthday parties, get-together, etc., is highly unnecessary.	92.67	7.33

Source: Field Survey



Source: Field Survey

Through the analysis of the influence of demographic factors on green purchase behaviour of

consumers after COVID-19 scenario, the study tries to analyse various demographic factors influencing the green purchase behaviour of consumers in 15



Prime Cities and Urban Agglomerations of Kerala after the COVID-19 pandemic by means of the Chi-

square test. The results of the analysis are exhibited in Table No. II.

Table No. II Influence of Demographic factors on the Green Buying Behaviour of Consumers after COVID-19 scenario

Hypo. No.	Degrees of Freedom (DF)	χ^2 (Chi Square)		Level of Significance	Result
		Table Value	Calculated Value		
H ₀₁	4	13.28	13.83	.01*	Rejected
H ₀₂	4	9.49	10.48	.05**	Rejected
H ₀₃	9	21.67	28.88	.01*	Rejected
H ₀₄	9	14.68	15.63	.05**	Rejected
H ₀₅	7	14.07	16.37	.02*	Rejected
H ₀₆	7	14.07	18.35	.02*	Rejected
H ₀₇	4	9.49	5.07	.05**	Accepted
H ₀₈	4	9.49	9.96	.05**	Rejected
H ₀₉	2	9.21	12.26	.01*	Rejected

Source: SPSS Output Note:* Highly Significant **Significant

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

All the hypotheses formulated except one (H₀₇) were rejected, since their calculated chi-square values are greater than their respective table values at 0.05, 0.02 and 0.01 levels of significance as is evident from Table No. II. Hence hypotheses H₀₁, H₀₂, H₀₃, H₀₄, H₀₅, H₀₆, H₀₈ and H₀₉ stands rejected.

Following are the inferences drawn from the analysis:

- Consumers' Lifestyle has become healthier after COVID-19 scenario irrespective of their Age.
- Irrespective of the Consumers' Age, the healthier Lifestyle they have adopted after the COVID-19 scenario has decreased common diseases among them.
- Average Monthly Income has a positive influence on the green buying behaviour of the consumers.
- Influence of price on the green purchase decision of the people after the COVID-19 scenario has a significant, positive association with their Average Monthly Income.
- Education has a significant influence on the green purchase decision making of the consumers due to fear factor, after COVID-19 scenario.
- People who has turned towards green purchase behaviour after COVID-19

scenario and their Educational Status has a highly significant, positive association.

- The purchase preference towards online methods over store purchase is not significantly influenced by the consumers' Education.
- Age of the people has a significant positive influence on their choice for frequently resorting to online payment methods.
- Size of the family has a highly significant influence on the thoughts of the people that there is a lot of unnecessary spending for social gatherings, after COVID-19 scenario.

CONCLUSION

From the above analysis, it can be concluded that factors like age, average monthly income, educational status, size of the family and fear factors have profound influence on the green purchase decisions of the consumers in Kerala after the COVID-19 scenario. However, it should be noted that the purchase preference towards online methods over store purchase is not significantly influenced by the consumers' educational status. Moreover, the study in-toto confirms that there has been a paradigm shift in the outlook and the life styles of the consumers in the State after the COVID-19 scenario and there has been an apparent inclination of consumers towards Green products.



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