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Consumer perception and attitudes about the probiotic foods in Indian market

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Consumer interest in the relationship between diet and health has increased substantially in the recent decades. Trends in population demographics and socio-economic changes also point to the need for foods with added health benefits. Although the level of consumer awareness about functional foods is less in India as compared to the western world but gradually, functional foods are gaining significance in the Indian market. Consumer surveys are extremely important to the food industry, as they allow for the identification of the level of knowledge about a determined subject and also for the tracing of strategies to correct and or identify failings in order to increase the sales of a food product, consequently increasing company profits and the level of consumer awareness. A self-designed questionnaire was developed to determine the level of awareness, knowledge, perceptions and the interest of Indian consumer concerning probiotic foods and their willingness to try these foods. A representative random sample of 735 adults above 18 years of age was collected from Delhi, capital city of India. The study revealed that 98.1% of the consumers had heard of the Probiotics and 69.6% felt that they were good microbes with health benefits. 13.5% categorized them as nutrient supplements and mere 14.3% used them on regular basis. Only 13.9% were prescribed by medical practitioners whereas 61.2% were consumed for their health benefits. Data from this study indicated that the majority of the consumers who participated were aware of the link between diet and health. Awareness of such a relationship is believed to be the first step in motivating interest for acquiring knowledge concerning healthy eating choices such as probiotics.

Biography

Shalini Sehgal is currently an Associate Professor in the Department of Food Technology at Bhaskaracharya College of Applied Sciences, University of Delhi, India. She holds a Doctorate from National Dairy Research Institute (NDRI), Karnal. She has 18 years of experience in the field of education and has been associated with various academic and research projects. Her area of interest is food safety. She is the recipient of the Best Teacher Award by the Directorate of Higher Education, Government of Delhi for the year 2011-2012.

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