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The Impact of Consumer Health Awareness on Healthy Eating Habits: A Trend Analysis

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Abstract

This study examines the consumer health awareness by analyzing digital search interests during 60 months, extending from 2020 to 2024. Employing a quantitative research design, data were collected from Google Trends to investigate the relationship between (Healthy Food Awareness), measured by Relative Search Volume (RSV) for health benefits and four key dietary variables: Diet, Sugar-Free, Whole Food, and High Protein. Descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and linear regression analyses were performed on a sample of 60 monthly observations.

The findings reveal a significant qualitative split in the market. Regression results confirm that health awareness is a primary driver for Diet ($R^2 = 0.225$, $p < 0.001$) and Whole Food ($p = 0.021$), supporting H4 and H3. Conversely, (Whole Food) and (High Protein) exhibit greater stability, indicating a dedicated consumer segment focused on nutritional integrity and long term wellness. Furthermore, a significant negative correlation between (High Protein) and (Diet) ($r = -0.419$, $p < 0.01$) highlights a divergence between traditional dieting and fitness-oriented behaviors.

Keywords: Google Trends; Consumer behavior; Healthy Food Awareness; Whole Food, Healthy Food.

1. Introduction

Nutrition is crucial for human development both biologically and socially. Biologically, nutrition is needed to support the growth of humans across different stages of life and prevent disease (Beala et al., 2024, p1).

Healthy food shall compose of all nutrients and non-nutrients in proper composition. It shall adequately meet the human need to guarantee the best nutrition status of the people when it put into a daily habit. Besides, it shall also be safe and free from any hazardous component that gives harmful effect to human health (Ngurah & Pinatih, 2020, p380).

Healthy eating is not simply about nutrients to limit; good health is reliant on regular consumption of a number of essential nutrients (vitamins, minerals, essential amino acids and fatty acids) and fiber (Ayela & Victoria, 2021, p 354). Furthermore, it is stated that demand of food additives has been increased which leads to several serious health related diseases. (Ribeiro Jéssica Souza, 2019).

The way our food products are processed by the food industry has been blamed for an increase in obesity in many countries. consumption of processed foods, particularly those that are ultra processed, can have negative health effects, such as overweight and obesity (Alenica et al., 2023, p1). Nutrient-dense foods have been loosely described as those that provide substantial amounts of nutrients and relatively little energy, but a science-based definition is lacking. (Gregory D. et al., 2009, p 1198).

The global prevalence of people living with overweight and obesity has been steadily rising since the 1970s, nearly tripling since 1975 (Bennett et al., 2024, p1). The growing occurrence of chronic illnesses caused by poor eating habits, unhealthy lifestyles, along with air pollution, have raised awareness concerning the link between health, sustainability and dietary patterns (Uliano et al., 2024, p1). With the increasing occurrence of diseases such as obesity, diabetes, the demand for healthier food options has intensified universally. The body is nourished when it is fed on fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and foods rich in nutrients. From these, the cells extract the nutrients necessary for proper functioning (Sarac & Butnariu, p 26). Poor dietary patterns are major risk factors for chronic diseases and pose a challenge to public health (Ayela & Victoria, 2021, p 354). Unhealthy diet and obesity are major risk factors for noncommunicable diseases such as cardiovascular diseases, cancers, and diabetes (Roche, 2025, p 1).

Tackling obesity clearly remains a priority, there is also a need to consider the overall nutritional quality of diets (Ayela & Victoria, 2021, p 354).

The growing awareness of the impact of health-related concerns on consumer behavior has become healthier food oriented (Ngurah & Pinatih, 2020, p380). The consequences of insufficient awareness extend to elevated rates of malnutrition disorders and adverse health outcomes, underscoring the urgent need for targeted education and intervention programs (Ahmed et al., 2024, p 114).

The availability of information has experienced significant growth, which has helped consumers to improve their awareness of healthy eating. Information has become accessible through digital platforms, which are used as essential tools for acquiring knowledge about food choices, nutrition, and health-related dietary practices.

Online searches for food have become an increasing tendency, as consumers consider the search engines for advice on nutrition and food safety, which provide valuable insight into the changing dynamics of consumer awareness, and track consumer interest shift in real-time.

Through this study, we aim to highlight the consumers awareness of healthy food during the research period. Furthermore, this study seeks to identify the impact of on consumer awareness of healthy food on independent variables (diet, sugar free, whole food, high protein). Consequently, this research focuses on addressing the following hypothesises:

H1: Search interest in (High Protein) is positively associated with consumer awareness of healthy food.
H2: Search interest in (Sugar Free) is positively associated with consumer awareness of healthy food.
H3: Search interest in (Whole Food) is positively associated with consumer awareness of healthy food.
H4: Search interest in (Diet) is positively associated with consumer awareness of healthy food.

2. Literature review

2.1. Awareness of nutritional information

Consumer awareness refers to the level of knowledge that consumers possess when making a purchase decision, and it has a significant impact on consumer intention. Consumer awareness is the cognitive assessment made by individuals regarding their own needs and desires, with the anticipation that these requirements will be fulfilled through the act of purchasing (Raya & Taha, 2023, p 193).

The consumer awareness is a psychological and behavioral concept made by several factors, including health values, media campaigns, society, and the information collected in digital platforms. Low food awareness often leads individuals to prioritize sensory experience over nutritional considerations when making food choices (Ahmed et al., 2024, p 114). The

adoption of healthier eating practices is affected by the positivity of perceptions toward plant-based alternatives and an increase in awareness about health benefits from sustainable and healthier foods (Ludovica et al., 205, p 6).

Nutrition takes a vital role as it can bring people into either healthy as well as unhealthy state (Ngurah & Pinatih, 2020, p380). Food shall be defined as any substance enters to the human body, ingested and/or eaten and will react with the body to provide energy for life and activity, building up and/or repairing tissue and regulating bodily process (Ngurah & Pinatih, 2020, p380). Healthy food choices, such as eating more fruits and vegetables, have not only physical but also mental health benefits and might be a long-term investment in future well-being (Deborah R. et al., 2017, p 1).

Researchers have examined consumer behavior in purchasing healthy and organic food through four main aspects: the effects of using chemical compounds in food production, consumer concerns regarding environmental and health issues, barriers to developing the market for green and healthy food, and the influence of food pricing on consumer buying behavior (Ali et al., 2024, p2).

Consciousness deepens; it is more likely that people will recognize the health consequences of their diet and correct their behavior accordingly. Consumer awareness and knowledge have become critical elements in changing the attitude and behavior of consumers towards products (Dhavindra, 2022, p 29). Consumer's awareness (either consciously or unconsciously) precedes the control, modification, elimination and change in human behaviors and decisions. Thus, effective consumer behavior can only be materialized through awareness (Suraiya et al., 2012, p 109). Health consciousness is defined as "the degree to which someone attends to or focuses on his or her health" (Gould, S. J., 1990, p 228).

Consumers' level of health motivation is related to how interested consumers are in maintaining good health by, for example searching for health-related information or eating a healthy diet (Mathilde T. et al., 2022, p 2). Health motivation is often related to nutrition knowledge. A person who is more motivated to eat healthy, usually has more knowledge on nutrition as well (Mathilde T. et al., 2022, p 2). Several authors have concluded consumers' attention focus mainly on the packaging design elements, flavor and brand familiarity, while food nutritional information is only used by highly-health motivated customers. (Javier Liñán et al., 2019, p 680). Moreover, there are numerous considerations through which the context of food systems can be deeply understood within which people make decisions related to their diets and where vulnerable people are more affected by several different barriers such as high costs, limited access to nutritious foods, lack of knowledge, cultural resistance, and inadequate policy support (Ludovica et al., 205, p 7).

2.2. Health-related variables

Numerous dimensions of healthy food have been autonomously examined in marketing, health, and nutrition literature, among those dimensions we state the following:

2.2.1. High Protein

There are several options on the market to meet the needs of consumers who are more concerned and attentive to their food choices and healthy lifestyles, including nutritionally enriched foods. Nutritionally enriched foods are foods with the addition of one or more essential nutrients as a way to prevent or correct nutrient deficiencies (Silva et al., 2024, p 1).

Nutrient-rich alternatives have been linked to preventive healthcare, supporting findings that consumers seek functional foods that deliver specific health outcomes. By choosing nutrient-dense foods and beverages, consumers will be in a better position to meet their nutrient requirements without overconsuming energy (Gregory D. et al., 2009, p 1198).

2.2.2. Sugar Free

It was found in several studies that labeling of sugar content has a significant impact on purchasing behavior. Consuming free sugars increases the risk of dental caries (tooth decay). Excess calories from foods and drinks high in free sugars also contribute to unhealthy weight gain, which can lead to overweight and obesity. Recent evidence also shows that free sugars influence blood pressure and serum lipids, and suggests that a reduction in free sugars intake reduces risk factors for cardiovascular diseases (Morenga et al., 2014, pp 65–79).

2.2.3. Diet

Scientists and researchers have studied many techniques to lose weight, but the most common and effective ways are also the oldest ways: diet and exercise. Eating healthy and exercising require hard work and a lot of willpower, but the overall benefits are endless (Schoenfeld, 2017, p 1). A healthy balanced diet is composed of a variety of nutritionally balanced food ingredients which satisfy a person's nutritional requirements.

A healthy diet leads to a healthier body mass and general health (Buettner, 2016, p 318). WHO defines a balanced diet as one composed of 50-60% carbohydrate, 10-15% of protein and 25-30% of fat, with vitamin and mineral intake following the recommended daily allowance (RDA) (WHO, 2015, pp 1- 6).

A balanced diet includes a variety of foods from all food groups, ensuring that individuals receive the necessary nutrients for optimal health (Gaurav et al., 2024. p 316). A balanced diet promotes physical vitality, mental clarity, and emotional well-being by guaranteeing that the body receives a sufficient and diverse supply of nutrients. It cultivates this harmonious relationship between food consumption and physical well-being (Gaurav et al., 2024. p 317).

2.2.4. Whole Food

Whole foods contain their natural structure and are minimally processed. Whole foods (WFs) are generally defined as foods that are less processed and close to their original state, including vegetables, fruits, whole grains, beans, and edible fungus. This plant-based diet is often recommended for micronutrient supplementation and calorie restriction (Xunyu et al., 2022, p1).

A whole-food plant-based (WFPB) diet is a diet that consists mainly or entirely of vegetables, whole grains, legumes, fruits, nuts and seeds, and contains little or no foods derived from animals (Alison et al., 2022, p1). Whole foods plant-based approaches to eating offer the individual a host of health benefits (Esquivel, 2022, p 288).

2.3. Digital Search Trends and Marketing Implications

Consumers with health-conscious dietary patterns were more willing to trade-off the nutritional attributes of the product (Javier Liñán et al., 2019, p 681). The perceived healthiness of food is influenced by a complex interplay of factors, including on the product side: communicated information, product category, packaging attributes, ingredients, organic origin, and sensory features, and on the consumer side: cognitive factors, socioeconomic status, and cultural influences (Stephan et al., 2024, p 2). Besides the design of a product, it was found that consumers particularly look for the ingredients in the packaging that nutrition experts recommend in terms of healthy eating (Stephan et al., 2024, p 2).

The literature on consumer decision-making process highlights the crucial role of the consumers' preferences for high-quality products. Quality and credence attributes, such as environmental sustainability and healthiness, are determinant in guiding consumers' buying behaviors. Some studies demonstrate that health and safety concerns are main reasons that lead consumers to choose organic food (Lamonaca et al., 2022, p 3).

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design

We adopt in this study the quantitative research approach: this research considers Google Trends as a digital tool as a source for the data collected. Thus, we aim to analyze trends in consumer awareness of healthy food by investigating search behaviors related to health-related variables such as diet, sugar free, whole food, and high protein. The study covers a five-year period (2020–2024), providing a sample size of 60 monthly observations. We aim to identify the relationships between different health-related search dimensions and overall consumer awareness of healthy food, utilizing descriptive statistics and correlation analysis to draw meaningful conclusions.

3.2. Data Collection

We focused on Google Trends to collect the study data, since it provides publicly available data on search queries that can be analyzed to infer consumer interest in a variety of topics, including food and health. Google Trends aggregates the number of searches for specific keywords during a given period and assigns a Relative Search Volume (RSV) score which reflects the intensity of searches for those terms. The data were collected over a period of five years. We selected this period because it provides a comprehensive view of long-term trends and allows us to observe potential seasonal swings in consumer interest.

3.3. Study Variables

We adopted in this study the following independent variables (factors with potential impact on consumer awareness) and dependent variable (consumer awareness of healthy food):

3.3.1. Dependent Variables

Diet: This refers to searches related to structured eating and information regarding healthy nutritional substitutes.
Sugar free: This refers to search interest in foods containing no added sugar.
Whole food: This reflects the interest in unprocessed foods.
High protein: This focuses on foods including a high concentration of protein.

3.3.1. Independent Variable:

Which is defined as consumer Awareness of Healthy Food: This is replaced through the Relative Search Volume (RSV) for the search term (health benefits) on Google Trends, reflecting the degree to which consumers are aware of and interested in healthy food alternatives.

3.4. Data Analysis Methods

In order to summarize and present the general patterns and characteristics of search activity over time, we employed the descriptive statistics method, based on the observation of the Relative Search Volume (RSV) for chosen search terms.

Additionally, for evaluating the relationship between the dependent and independent variables, we conducted a correlation analysis to test how the consumer awareness of healthy food affects the search interest in selected health-related themes. Based on a quantified relationship between search volumes of each term, this method permits the identification of potential health drivers influencing consumer healthy habit. The correlations show whether greater interest for specific nutritional features reflect a stronger tendency towards healthy eating behavior.

For conducting the aimed analysis, we used Microsoft Excel. Additionally, we employed it to conduct the Pearson correlation analysis, and the linear regression analysis assessing the strength and significance of the linear relationships between the study variables. Each

relationship was evaluated based on the correlation coefficient (r) and corresponding significance level (p-value).

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Results

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics (N=60)

	High Protein	Sugar free	Diet	Whole Food	Health benefits
Mean	5.950	5.833	61.500	1.466	7.783
Standard Error	0.209	0.059	1.363	0.064	0.089
Median	6.000	6.000	59.500	1.000	8.000
Mode	5.000	6.000	60.000	1.000	8.000
Standard Deviation	1.620	0.457	10.562	0.503	0.691
Range	6.000	2.000	53.000	1.000	3.000
Confidence Level (95.0%)	0.418	0.118	2.728	0.129	0.178

Source: Prepared by the researcher, based on MS Excel, 2026.

As shown in table (1), general interest in (Health Benefits) (Mean = 7.78) and (Diet) (Mean = 61.50) is dominant, while actual searches for specific solutions like (Whole Food) (Whole Food = 1.46) remain relatively niche. Additionally, the data reveals a major difference in how these trends behave over time. General (Diet) interest is highly instable, with a massive Range 53 and Standard Deviation 10.56. In contrast, interest in Whole Food and High Protein is much more stable and consistent. This indicates that these specific habits are likely driven by a dedicated group of consumers rather than seasonal trend-seekers.

Finally, the statistical integrity of data is very strong. The fact that the Mean and Median for (Health Benefits) are almost identical (7.78 versus 8.00) proves the data is well-balanced. Combined with low Standard Errors, this confirms that Google Trends sample is a reliable and accurately represents actual consumer behavior, providing a solid foundation for subsequent correlation and regression analyses.

Table 2. Correlation Matrix (N=60)

	High Protein	Sugar free	Diet	Whole Food	Health benefits
High Protein	1.000				
Sugar Free	0.286*	1.000			
Diet	-0.419**	0.175	1.000		
Whole Food	0.320*	0.123	0.051	1.000	
Health Benefits	0.202	0.206	0.475***	0.296*	1.000

Significance Levels: *p < 0.05, **p < 0.01, ***p < 0.001

Source: Prepared by the researcher, based on MS Excel, 2026.

It is observed in the correlation matrix in Table 2 that a significant negative correlation ($r = -0.419$, $p < 0.01$) exists between (High Protein) and (Diet). This inverse relationship suggests these are two different camps of consumers. As one search trend rises, the other falls. However, the (High Protein) and (Whole Food) have come with ($r = 0.320$, $p < 0.01$). This means people potentially searching for natural or unprocessed options are also likely looking for protein. They are part of the same healthy lifestyle group. Moreover, (Diet) and (Whole

Food) (0.051, $p < 0.01$) have almost zero correlation. This suggests that people searching for diets are not necessarily interested in whole foods.

Furthermore, it is significantly read in the table 2 that health aware consumers are highly interested in diet ($r = 0.475$, $p < 0.001$), which strengthens that the customer still largely equates health with traditional dieting behaviors. While (Whole Food) shows a reliable connection to (Health Benefits) ($r = 0.296$, $p < 0.05$). Nevertheless, health awareness of healthy food is weakly connected to protein and sugar free interests.
In conclusion, the data suggests that health awareness consumers are highly interested in diet, this interest often creates a nutritional dilemma, driving them to search for immediate, direct solutions.

Table 3. Regression Results Summary Table (N=60)

H	Dependent Variable	Coefficient beta	Std. Error	t-Stat	P-value	$\mathbf{R^2}$	Result
H1	High Protein	0.086	0.055	1.571	0.121	0.040	Not supported
H2	Sugar Free	0.310	0.194	1.600	0.115	0.042	Not supported
H3	Whole Food	0.406	0.172	2.357	0.021	0.087	Supported
H4	Diet	0.031	0.007	4.108	0.000	0.225	Supported

Significance: Results are considered supported if \(p < 0.05\).

Source: Prepared by the researcher, based on MS Excel, 2026.

The regression results in Table.1 reveal a hierarchical impact among variables. H4 emerged as the most dominant predictor, yielding a Coefficient beta of 0.031 with a highly significant p-value of 0.000**.** Despite a small coefficient, its t-Stat of 4.108 and the model's R^2 of 0.225 indicate that 22.5% diet is consistently driven by health awareness. Moreover, H3 also showed a strong positive association with a Coefficient beta of 0.406 (p= 0.021)**,** confirming that whole food is significantly driven by awareness of healthy food. However, the analysis showed that H1 and H2 with p-values of 0.121 and 0.115, and the higher standard errors (0.055 and 0.194) suggest that while interest in high protein and sugar free exists, it is too volatile to be considered reliable outputs of overall healthy food awareness during the 60-month period.

4.2. Discussion

The study outcomes provide data-driven insights to examine the evolving trends of consumer health awareness as reflected through digital search behavior. By analyzing Google trends data over a 60 month period, we identified how healthy food awareness contributes to specific dietary interests construct of high protein, sugar free, whole food, and diet.

4.2.1. The Dominance of Traditional Dieting Frameworks

The regression analysis confirms H4, establishing health awareness as the most significant and consistent predictor of(Diet), ($R^2 = 0.225$, $p < 0.001$). This aligns with traditional health models, suggesting that consumers primarily equate (healthy food) with weight management. However, the high standard deviation (10.56) and range (53) in the descriptive statistics suggest that this interest is highly seasonal. This implies that while consumers are frequently concerned with health, this interest is often reactive, triggered by external factors, rather than a sustained lifestyle commitment.

4.2.2. The Complexity of Whole Food Interest

The support for H3 ($p = 0.021$, beta = 0.406) indicates a significant qualitative shift in consumer awareness. Unlike (Diet) which is often focused on issues such as calories or fat, the interest in (Whole Food) suggests a proactive search for nutritional integrity and clean

eating. Moreover, the positive correlation between (whole food) and (high protein) (R = 0.320) highlights a specific segment of consumers who prioritize food quality. This aligns with the preventive health model, where food is viewed as a functional tool for long term wellness rather than just a means for short term weight loss.

4.3.3. The "Nutritional Problem of High Protein and Sugar Free Interest

the regression model has not supported H1 and H2 ($p > 0.05$). While these terms show steady search volume, healthy food awareness in this specific model does not currently act as a reliable driver. The significant negative correlation between High Protein and Diet ($r = -0.419$, $p < 0.01$) suggests a division of the market into two distinct camps. One group follows traditional dieting, while the other, possibly more fitness-oriented, prioritizing protein. This division suggests that (High Protein) is currently viewed as a niche performance attribute rather than a general marker of health awareness.

4.4.4. Practical Implications and Research Value

From a strategic perspective, these findings suggest that while (diet) is most effective for reaching a mass audience, the stability of (whole food) is more effective for engaging consumers with health awareness. The stability of the (whole food) and (high protein) metrics indicates a loyal, consistent consumer base that businesses should target for long-term brand growth. Furthermore, the statistical integrity of this data, shown by the balanced mean and median of health benefits, validates Google Trends as a strong tool for market analysis, offering a scalable alternative to traditional consumer surveys.

4. Conclusion

We examined through this study the impact of consumer awareness regarding healthy foods on healthy habits by analyzing digital search trends for specific nutritional interests. The study data was drawn from Google Trends covering a five-year period (2020-2024). Using terms such as diet, sugar free, whole foods, and high protein. The findings reveal a significant shift in how consumers seek nutritional information, highlighting a clear distinction between general health interests and specific dietary habits regarding the interest in high protein, and sugar free foods. Moreover, the linear regression reveals a significant association of health awareness and both whole food and diet. The strong positive association for (Diet) suggests that the majority of consumers still view healthy eating through traditional weight management and routines. Meanwhile, the support for (Whole Food) indicates a growing, stable sample prioritizing natural, unprocessed options as a cornerstone of health.

Additionally, while digital platforms have enabled access to health information, consumer awareness remains heavily weighted toward traditional dieting. These results emphasize the need for intervention programs that bridge the gap between general (dieting) and more consistent, nutrient-dense habits like (whole food) consumption to combat the rising global prevalence of obesity and non-communicable diseases.

This study contributes to marketing and consumer behavior literature by providing experimental evidence based on real-world digital search patterns. The use of Google Trends provides actionable perceptions for businesses. Targeted informative campaigns that align with high-interest words can improve and encourage healthier food alternatives.

Future researches could enlarge this framework by integrating more geographic or demographic factors, or by involving emerging related-sustainability concepts and food ethics, offering more understanding of consumer motivations in the growing health food landscape.

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