

## **Awareness of consumers regarding the Health benefits of Neera Health Drink in Malapuram district of Kerala.**

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*Abstract-*

*Neera is a non-alcoholic drink procured from the immature coconut flowers. Neera is a fresh juice and a delicious health drink. It is a sweet non-alcoholic drink. It is an innovative value added product from the coconut processing sector. It can be used as a soft drink as well as health drink which is highly delicious in taste. If not fermented chemically, it does not have any alcoholic content and therefore fresh in its form and hence can be consumed by any age group. Therefore, Neera can be termed as 'Keramritham' or Elixir from the Kalpavriksh or Coconut tree.*

*A consumer does not merely buy a product, he or she buys a bundle of utilities. A product should satisfy multiple needs and wants of a consumer. There is no doubt that, a Consumer is the King in the modern Market. Today consumers have much option to satisfy their needs and wants. So every product should have a Unique selling Proposition (USP) to increase its sales.*

*As far as Neera Health Drink is concerned, it's USP is that is a natural health drink with a lot of Health benefits. But are consumers aware of this? The Marketers of Neera Health drink should highlight the Health benefits of Neera Health drink in order to push its sales .*

*The present study is an attempt to understand if consumers are really aware of the Health benefits of Neera Health drink and if the Marketers have been successful enough to*

*highlight the health benefits of Neera ,while comparing it with other substitutes available in the Market.*

*This study will help the Marketers of Neera Health drink to promote Neera as natural health drink with multiple benefits and thereby increase the demand of Neera Health drink for the benefits of Various stake holders in the Industry.*

*Keywords: Neera, USP, Consumers, Marketers, Stakeholders, Buying motive*

## **Introduction:**

The coconut, a benevolent tree and nature's gift to mankind, is a source of food, beverage, oilseed, fibres, timber, health products and also associated with mystery and omen in the life of people. It is eulogised, reverently as "Kalpavruksha". Neera, a sweet sap tapped from the immature inflorescence of coconut too has a lot of health benefits and needs attention and promotion as nutritional drink.

Neera and its value-added products have a higher competitive advantage over existing soft drinks/beverages. Not all carbohydrate foods are ranked equal, in fact they behave quite differently in our bodies due to individual metabolism. The glycemic index or GI describes this difference by ranking carbohydrates according to their effect on our blood glucose level. Low glycemic index foods produce only small fluctuations in our blood glucose and insulin level. Neera is safe and perhaps the best health drink for persons suffering from diabetes. This is because of its low glycemic index (GI). The GI is a measure of how quickly and how high a particular food item raises the blood sugar level by releasing glucose into the blood stream. The use of neera and its by products gives the same sweetness without causing spikes in blood sugar level compared to the traditional sweetening agents. So neera and its value added products can be safely used by diabetic patients.

Neera contains high amount of glutamic acid which is the amino acid used by the body to build proteins. It is high in inositol which is beneficial for the treatment of eye abnormalities, eczema etc. The most significant characteristic of the product is its low Glycemic Index (GI is 35), an indicator of the extent of sugar absorbed into the blood. It is an abundant source of minerals, 17 amino acids, Vitamin C, broad-spectrum B vitamins, and has a nearly neutral pH. The pH value of neera is the range of 3.9-4.7 and has specific gravity 1.058-1.077. Palm Jaggery, by product extracted from neera, possess high medicinal properties and is widely used for ayurvedic preparations. Palm sugar, with its low GI, is

expected to cater to the needs of diabetic patients.(NP.more health benefits needs to be added)

A recent study conducted by the Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore shows that neera can help cure liver diseases. The study proves that neera is particularly useful in treating liver diseases following consumption of alcohol. The magical property of neera to remove “acetaldehyde” (the toxic metabolic product of ethanol causing liver damage) was proven in the study. It has also been shown to boost the activity of a normally functioning liver.

The amazingly low GI of neera and it's various by-products are indirectly helpful in preventing many lifestyle diseases like obesity, cardiovascular diseases and even cancers of the breast, colon, pancreas and prostate.It has been studied for use in medical conditions like asthma, tuberculosis and urinary tract infections.

Neera is rich in minerals like potassium, magnesium, zinc and iron. The role of potassium in lowering blood pressure has already been discussed here. It can be given as a natural supplement of these minerals in conditions like iron deficiency anaemias and zinc deficiency. Another advantage of neera is that, it's a rich source of Vitamin B complex, Vitamin A and Vitamin C(ascorbic acid). The anti-oxidant property of these vitamins and the neutral pH makes neera a natural detoxifying health drink. Apart from the minerals and vitamins, the sweet drink is rich in glutamic acid (amino acid) which is necessary for protein synthesis.

In addition to the above mentioned benefits, neera is also capable of delivering the following health benefits:

- According to various clinical studies, neera has applications for various health conditions including asthma, anemia, bronchial suffocation, tuberculosis, and piles.
- It is high in inositol, a naturally occurring nutrient, which is beneficial for the treatment of eczema, eye abnormalities, etc. It is also associated with the regulation of enzyme activity, nerve transmission, and transportation of fats within the body. Inositol is essential for hair growth and it also helps prevents hair fall and baldness to a great extent.
- It is a natural remedy for kidney stones as wells as urinary problems.
- Neera helps reduce high cholesterol levels in the blood.

- Neera contains inulin, which is believed to support gut health, prevent colon cancer, promote lipid metabolism, improve immunity, and prevent obesity and fatty liver disease.
- The low Glycemic Index of neera is helpful in preventing many lifestyle diseases such as cardiovascular diseases, obesity, and even various types of cancers including breast, colon, pancreas and prostate cancers.
- Neera is a good source of antioxidants and therefore exhibits anti-aging properties.

According to V. Ponnuswami, Professor and Principal Investigator, 'neera' is preferred for its high nutritive values. Every 500 ml contains a pH of 7.7, 99.4 mg protein, 57.6 g total sugars, 11.0 mg iron, 64.80 mg phosphorus, 70.80 mg calcium, 24.00 mg ascorbic acid, 166.60 mg riboflavin, 1348.20 mg nicotinic acid, 166.60 mg thiamine and 22.00 calorie energy.

#### Composition of Neera

Total solids (g/100ml)	15.2 - 19.7
pH	3.9 - 4.7
Specific gravity	1.058 - 1.077
Total sugars (g/100ml)	14.40
Original reducing sugars (g/100ml)	5.58
Total reducing sugars (g/100ml)	9.85
Total ash (g/100ml)	0.11 - 0.41
Citric acid (g/100ml)	0.50
Alcohol in %	nil
Iron (g/100ml)	0.15
Phosphorus (g/100ml)	7.59
Ascorbic acid (mg/100ml)	16.30
Total protein (g/100ml)	0.23 - 0.32

### III Research Objectives

- (i) To analyse if consumers are aware of the Nutritive value of Neera Health Drink.
- (ii) To analyse if consumers are aware of the Medicinal value of Neera Health drink.
- (iii) To analyse if consumers are aware that Neera is a non-alcoholic Health drink.
- (iv) To analyse if consumers know that Neera can cure various vitamin deficiencies.

- (v) Does diabetic patients know that ,they can consume Neera.

#### IV Research Hypothesis

Based on the objectives framed, the following statistical null hypothesis were framed and tested in the appropriate places.

- (i) Ho1: Awareness of Nutritive value of Neera Health drink of the respondents is equal to average.
- (ii) Ho2: Awareness of respondents regarding Medicinal value of Neera is equal to average.
- (iii) Ho3: Awareness of Consumers regarding non –alcoholic nature of Neera is equal to average.
- (iv) Ho4: Awareness of Diabetic patients that they can consume Neera is equal to average.

#### V. Research Methodology

The researcher made use of Primary source that is , contacted the Neera consumers directly. A Structured Questionnaire was used to collect data from 50 respondents from two Taluks of Malappuram district of Kerala State in India.

The Sampling technique used was Stratified Random Sampling. For the calculation and analysis of data, statistical tools and techniques like mean was used using SPSS.21.

#### VI. Analysis and Interpretation of Data.

Only a few important parameters and variables are taken up for analysis here due to space constraints. The universe under study were divided into two taluks using stratified random sampling technique. The sample size was appropriately divided and classified based on gender, Taluks, Educational qualification and Income.

**Table1: Showing Classification of Respondents based on Taluks**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent

	Tirur	26	52.0	52.0	52.0
Valid	Ponani	24	48.0	48.0	100.0
	Total	50	100.0	100.0	

Source : Primary Data

### ***Testing of Hypothesis***

- (i) Ho1: Awareness of Nutritive value of Neera Health drink of the respondents is equal to average.

**Table2: showing the Awareness of Nutritive value**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
no	26	52.0	52.0	52.0
Valid yes	24	48.0	48.0	100.0
Total	50	100.0	100.0	

Source : Primary Data

Most of the respondents were not fully aware of the Nutritive value of Neera Health Drink. So the null hypothesis is rejected. So the awareness of the Nutitive value of Neera Health drink of the respondents is below average.

- (ii) Ho2: Awareness of respondents regarding Medicinal value of Neera is equal to average.

**Table3:Awareness of Respondents Regarding Medicinal value**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
no	32	64.0	64.0	64.0
Valid yes	18	36.0	36.0	100.0
Total	50	100.0	100.0	

Source: Primary Data

Most of the respondents were not fully aware of the Medicinal value of Neera Health Drink. So the null hypothesis is rejected. So the

awareness of the Medicinal value of Neera Health drink of the respondents is below average.

- (iii) Ho3: Awareness of Consumers regarding non –alcoholic nature of Neera is equal to average.

**Table 4: Awareness regarding Non alcoholic nature of Neera**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
no	26	52.0	52.0	52.0
Valid dont know	24	48.0	48.0	100.0
Total	50	100.0	100.0	

Source: Primary Data

Most of the respondents were not fully aware of the Non alcoholic nature of Neera Health Drink. So the null hypothesis is rejected. So the awareness of the non alcoholic nature of Neera Health drink of the respondents is below average. Most of the respondents feel that Neera is alcoholic in nature.

- (iv) Ho4: Awareness of Diabetic patients that they can consume Neera is equal to average.

**diabetic can consumer neera**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
no	41	82.0	82.0	82.0
Valid yes	9	18.0	18.0	100.0
Total	50	100.0	100.0	

Source : Primary Data

Most of the respondents were not fully aware of that even diabetics could consume Neera or that consumption of Neera would not cause diabetes even though it is very sweet . So the null hypothesis is rejected. So the awareness of the Medicinal value of Neera Health drink of the respondents is below average. Most of the respondents feel that Neera is alcoholic in nature

## VI Findings

The researcher found that :-

- (i) Most of the respondents were not fully aware of the Nutritive value of Neera Health Drink. So the null hypothesis is rejected. So the awareness of the Nutitive value of Neera Health drink of the respondents is below average although respondents knew it was good
- (ii) Most of the respondents were not fully aware of the Medicinal value of Neera Health Drink. So the null hypothesis is rejected. So the awareness of the Medicinal value of Neera Health drink of the respondents is below average. But they believed it was good.
- (iii) Most of the respondents were not fully aware of the Non alcoholic nature of Neera Health Drink. So the null hypothesis is rejected. So the awareness of the non alcoholic nature of Neera Health drink of the respondents is below average. Most of the respondents feel that Neera is alcoholic in nature.
- (iv) Most of the respondents were not fully aware of that even diabetics could consume Neera or that consumption of Neera would not cause diabetes even though it is very sweet. So the null hypothesis is rejected. So the awareness of the Medicinal value of Neera Health drink of the respondents is below average. Most of the respondents feel that Neera is alcoholic in nature

## **VII Suggestions**

More awareness has to be created about the Health benefits of Nature's wonder drink called Neera. It was a surprise to know that majority of the respondents especially women felt that Neera was alcoholic in nature. Consumers have to be educated about the health benefits and nutritive value of Neera health drinks because the modern day consumers are highly health conscious. If they are fully aware of the health benefits of Neera, they would consume more Neera which would ultimately lead to more sales for Marketers.

## **VIII Limitations of the Study**

- The study was confined to only 2 Taluks of Malappuram district for the sake of convenience.



- A small sample size of 50 has been used due to the time constraints .
- Only a few Health benefits were highlighted in the Questionnaire, there could be more Health benefits.

### **IX. Future Research Implications**

This is an effort to study the awareness of the health benefits of Neera in two taluks of Malappuram district in Kerala. It is a small area as taluk is a further sub division of a district. So there is a relevant scope for conducting this study on a larger geographical area. Moreover a study could be conducted on the relationship between awareness of health benefits of Neera and buying behavior of the consumers.

### **X. Conclusion**

The study concludes stating that the awareness of consumers regarding the nutritive value or health benefits of Neera health drink is very poor. Even educated men and women are not aware of the health benefits of Neera. Most of the respondents were under the misconception that Neera is a alcoholic beverage like Toddy as it smelled like toddy. Women especially, need to be made aware of the health benefits of Neera. More campaigning is required to increase the awareness of health benefits of Neera even in God's own country which is named after the coconut tree.

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