



Consumer Acceptance Towards Organic Food

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Abstract

Consumer, nowadays are more concern about food safety. Policymakers at the same time putting more attention towards the concern and changing in the consumer behavior. Such awareness has influenced the pattern of food purchasing (Buzby, 2001). That aspect has been the expansion of demand for organically grown food, and is rapidly gaining ground in many parts of the world (Willer & Yussefi, 2004). Recently, there have been significant changes in the attitude of consumers towards food safety, environmental concern and also organic food products. Organic agriculture not only preserves the environment, but also has less harmful substances and improves health, bringing significant benefits. The interest of consumers and public institutions in organically-produced foods has increased globally.

Keywords: Purchase Intention, Purchase behaviour, Organic food

1. Introduction

The organic food market has grown continuously over the past decade, but, the total share of organic food is still small compared with the total food market. Even in countries with matured organic sectors such as Switzerland, Austria and Denmark, organic food consumption is barely more than 5 per cent of total food consumption (Willer & Kilcher, 2011). Several past studies provided evidence that consumer attitudes towards organic food significantly influence consumer choice (Magistris & Gracia, 2007). In order to promote organically produced products, a cohesive marketing strategy is needed, which depends on a better and fuller understanding of food consumers and their purchase behavior.

To achieve sustainable development, efforts should go beyond cleaner production to sustainable consumption (Narayanawamy & Stone, 2007). Sustainable consumption only includes buyer behavior for greener products that bring less pollution during production (OECD, 2002).

The organic market relies heavily on a committed core of consumers who buy organic products frequently. Organics future relies on the motivation of final users (Lyons *et al.* 2001). The need to uncover the differing mindset of consumers, where organic consumption is promising - but very little is known about the organic food consumers' beliefs, motivations and values driving their decision-making process compared to other countries (Essoussi & Zahaf 2009). In order to promote organic food products, marketers need to know buying behavior and psychographic factors. It is highly important to examine the underlying factors that might influence the tendency of consumer to purchase organic food. The rapid growth in demand and production of organic food necessitates continuous research in order to document and understand the evolution of these markets.

2. Knowledge about Organic Foods

Consumer generally act based on the knowledge they perceive. Knowledge change the consumer perception either positive or negative attitude. The more information we get, the more we have either favorable or unfavorable attitude towards the product. Since organic food is good for environmental, and health it's very important people should be informed about the benefits, which in turn may lead the consumer towards the purchase intention.

Consumers' knowledge is specific information that affects consumer buying decision. Ritson & Oughton, 2007; Padel & Foster, 2005 also argue that among other factors, consumers' knowledge about organic foods, compared with conventional food products are considered major barriers to the development of the organic food market. Consumers who have a lack of knowledge on organic food and those who do not buy it, will not, unless they are educated about its real benefits. Hill and Lynchehaun (2002) highlighted that knowledge appeared to be central to the effective marketing of organic foods. This highlights the need to understand the conviction of buyers about the utility of organic food. Same way, studies report that knowledge about the food or food production methods may result in the development of positive consumer attitudes and increase the likelihood of consumers accepting these foods (Berg, 2004; McEachern & Willock, 2004; Siegrist, 2000; Siegrist, *et al.*, 2008).

Yiridoe *et al.* (2005) discussed two reasons of knowledge that affect the buying intention of the customers: first, insufficiency of knowledge, the main reason that explains why consumers do not want to buy or choose organic food; second, consumers' perception of the lack of information provided about the organic products. Von Alvensleben (1997) argued that understandings and the perceptions of consumers about the organic food is important because these factors because they help consumers recognize the characteristics and benefits of organic food when compared with conventional food and adopt positive attitudes towards organic food.

3. Purchase intention towards Organic Food Products

Consumer buying intention is based on attitude. Past research has supported the factor attitude is an important motivation factor, which influence purchase intention. Positive attitude leads to the positive perception and hence it

motivates the consumer towards the product or service. Attitude can be developed based on internal and external stimulation the consumer has observed or experienced.

Voon *et al.* (2011) in their study investigated the determinants of willingness to purchase organic food among consumers in a Malaysian city, using a questionnaire survey. The results indicated that efforts to promote consumption growth should focus on influencing consumer attitudes. Tsarkiridou *et al.* (2008) found from their study that organic food products are believed to be healthier and higher quality than conventional food products. They found that care for the environment and health were important factors in the purchase of organic food products.

Lea & Worsley (2005) examined consumers' beliefs about organic foods and their relationship with social-demographics and self-transcendence (universal, benevolence) personal values in Australia. The majority of the participants in the study believed organic food to be healthier, tastier and better for the environment than conventional food. However, expense and lack of availability were strong barriers to the purchasing of organic foods. The results indicated that, generally, women were more positive about organic food than men. The personal value factor related to nature, environment and equality were the dominant predictor of positive organic food beliefs, followed by sex. A study by Fillion and Arazi (2002), found that organic orange juice was perceived as tasting better than conventional orange juice.

4. Purchase Behavior Towards Organic Food

Raghavan and Megeh (2013) studied the consumers' purchase intentions towards organic products in Chennai city. The findings of the study showed that perceptions towards organic food product had the strongest relationship with the buyer's intention to buy organic food product. A study carried out by Padiya and Vala (2012) in Ahmedabad city, illustrated the organic food consumers as less price sensitive, believers in quality and information; generally seek information from newspaper, magazines and at the point of purchase.

Shafie and Rennie (2012) study found that price was the restrain factor towards organic food consumption. Balaji and Bhama (2012) critically analyzed the consumer perception towards organic food products in India. The findings of the study revealed a significant relationship between various psychographic factors on the overall satisfaction of consumers towards organic food products. Sakthirama and Venkatram (2012) analysed the purchase intention of organic consumers in Coimbatore city, India and the findings revealed that purchase intention of consumers towards organic food products was influenced by attitude and knowledge and familiarity to consumers.

Sangkumchaliang and Huang (2012) analyzed consumers' perceptions and attitudes of organic food products in Northern Thailand. Their Results indicated that the main reasons for purchasing organic food products are an expectation of a healthy and environmentally friendly means of production. Further, the results showed that buyers tend to be older and higher educated than those who do not buy them. Saleki *et al.* (2012) in their study in Iran, determined the influence of organic knowledge, quality, price consciousness, subjective norms and familiarity on attitude and organic buying behavior.

Vlahovic *et al.* (2011), in a study in Serbia, analyzed the consumer attitude towards organic food consumption. The prime objective of that study was to identify the determinant factors that influence the demand and consumption of organic products and to examine consumers' preferences, motives that resulted in purchasing organic food products in Serbia. The findings showed that most of the consumers were not adequately informed about the importance of organic food consumption; high price was found to be a limiting factor and fruits and vegetables were the mostly preferred and purchased organic products.

Chakrabarti (2010), in a study in India, related the consumers' attitude as one of the important factors which influences the purchase process of organic food consumers. The study used descriptive survey and explanatory survey. The results indicated that the influence of customer value towards organic food products had a significant influence to the customer loyalty for the organic food products.

Gupta (2009) explored the consumer behavior for food products in India. The study found that though quality of food products was one of the most important parameters for food product purchase decision, people did not see much improvement in the quality related parameters for food items during the last ten years. People rated various parameters differently for different product groups. The results also indicated that cleanliness and free from pesticides were the most important criteria for products like food grains, pulses; store quality, marketing mix and taste, flavour explained the maximum variance in the purchase decision of fruit and vegetables. Choo *et al.* (2004) studied purchasing behaviour of new food product among innovator groups in India. They have found that consumers' attitudes will positively affect Indian consumers' intention to buy new processed foods. Besides, in India the experts also rated the attitude of the consumer is one of the most important factors in the organic consumers' purchase process.

Ajzen (2002) indicated that the more favourable the attitude with respect to behaviour, the stronger is the individual's intention to perform the behaviour under consideration and showed that when behaviours pose no serious problems of control, they can be predicted from intentions with considerable accuracy.

The result of researches shows that there is a positive relation between attitude toward organic food and buying intention of organic food (Chan & Lau, 2000; Aertsens *et al.*, 2009; Gracia & Magistris, 2007). The higher of attitude score toward organic food, the higher of buying intention of organic food.

5. Conclusion

Consumer behavior involves the psychological processes that consumers go through in recognizing the needs, finding ways to solve these needs; collect and interpret information; make plans and implement these plans, making purchase decisions and post-purchase behavior. Previous research has indicated that consumer behavior is changing towards purchase of many environmentally-friendly and organic products, due to awareness of environmental degradation and the related issues. The emergence of organic shops in markets supports the same and create the awareness to stimulate the customer need, wants and demand.

There is also a rise in concern that organic agriculture is essential in preserving the environment and in improving public health. Promotion of organic food is not only beneficial for producers, but also will respond to consumers' desire for higher food quality and food production that is less damaging to environment. The actions that people take and the choices they make to consume certain products and services have direct and indirect impacts on the environment, as well as on personal well-being (Jackson, 2005).

6. References

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