

CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR AND PURCHASE INTENTION FOR ORGANIC FOOD PRODUCTS: A REVIEW

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Abstract: Over the past few years, the demand for organically produced products have been changing considerably. Consumers are subjected to varied buying behaviours due to the availability of best options to choose upon. Through this article various factors which resulted in the major shift in consumer behaviour towards Organic Food have been reviewed and discussed. The study also intends to figure out the association between the variables which affects peoples buying behaviour for organic food products. The related findings have been extracted from various studies conducted in different countries and those factors have been carefully analysed to provide proposals for future research. These results displayed that there are basically nine factors which are likely to influence the consumer's purchase intention. The need to purchase organic food to enhance the value of life led to major impacts on the retail, distribution and marketing functions this business. Reviewing the literature studies has helped a lot to enlighten the general area of the research and to inspect the prevailing literature studies done so far.

Index Terms: Consumer attitude, purchase intention, Organic Food, Organic Farming, Consumer awareness, Market Segmentation.

I. INTRODUCTION

In the early twenties, by tradition many farmers were unaware of the modern and scientific food production techniques and hence, they avoided the use of artificial fertilizers, insecticides or other preserving substances in the course of food production. Later, the world started witnessing an exemplary transformation among the individuals both in terms of education as well in attitude towards life. This shift reflected a notable progress in the people's choice for Organic food products. Consequently, this intake of organic food was symbolic representation of the ethical value system (Grosplik, 2016). Then, a movement aroused between the year 1940's and 1960's when farmers slowly shifted in using more efficient and intensive food production techniques, which involved the use of advanced approaches. This trend prospered in spite of the knowledge regarding the benefits of Organic food. The upsurge of industrialization along with population outburst led to the immense pressure on the ways and means of production for agricultural crops. The aim was to make an increase in the yield of crops to meet the growing demand. Basically, conventional farming was considered as two-sides of the same coin; on one hand it stands for decreased input and higher output, while on the other hand it stands for environment destruction as well as threat to human health. As a result, Organic farming took a backseat and consumers preferred more of conventionally grown food products because of its wide abundance and lower price (Mutlu, 2007)

Conventional farming gave rise to an indiscriminate usage of chemicals which caused environment deterioration. Also, the money making objective led to the usage of hazardous insecticides and chemical fertilizers in the agriculture land. Consequently the consumers had to purchase food and food products which lack nutritional values and at the same time are unsafe to their well-being. Gradually, frequency of lifestyle diseases such as diabetes and heart disorders raised an alarm which made consumers realize the significance of food quality and safety (Menrad, 2003; Roberfroid, 2002). This recognition regarding the benefits of organically produced food products over these adulterated conventional yields, gave arise to a paradigm shift in consumer's preferences. This shift in consumer attitude occurred because organic food started fulfilling their expectations. Organic farming can be defined as an amalgamation of several practices which includes the application of organic fertilizers, locally altered seeds/breeds, natural pest control in combination with other high yield crops (Adamtey et al., 2016). Also, the price organic products became affordable with respect to their disposable income (Kriwy and Mecking, 2012).

Studies revealed that consumer's buying behaviour has a solid impact on their purchase intention. This forms the key indicator of procuring process and also are likely to influence their sensitivity towards the product. This complex procedures in turn facilitates the businesses to invite new consumers and modify the company's existing products and services as per their requirements and desires. Consumers also tend to be obliged towards the environment through their purchase of organic products. Narayanaswamy & Stone, 2007 recommended that the only way to attain an overall sustainable development in organic farming is through directing all the efforts to create a transformation from organic production to viable consumption. In India Organic manufacturing and the trades associated with it are considered as two significant sectors. They are measured as an important strategy adopted for a sustainable improvement of environment along with human well-being. The development of organic agriculture in India has gained prominence among the manufacturers, processors, dealer, exporters and finally the consumers.

In order to attain the objectives, this article is classified into sections given as follows: Section 2 deals with the objectives of the study. Research methodologies adopted in preparing this paper is mentioned in Section 3. Literature Reviews and Theories related to the study are outlined in Section 4. A new agenda has been formulated in Section 5. Section 6 deals with the distribution channels. Section 7 provides a brief overview about the Managerial suggestions and strategies for retailers which could serve as a point of reference for organizations dealing with the organic food. Section 8 deals with concluding the observations.

II. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This paper tries to evaluate the motives behind the shift in the attitude of the consumer, cluster the important factors and identify those factor which are not given ample importance in creating a positive vibe for consumer behaviour, through literature reviews.

III. METHODOLOGY

To address these objectives, a systematic review on various research papers were made to find out the primary factors behind the shift in the consumer attitude. Various steps were implemented while selecting the related literatures for this review.

First, the focus was on the methods adopted in prior review articles (Canabal and White, 2008; Terjesen et al., 2016) and piloted a broad search for organic food and interdisciplinary literature published in the last 26 years i.e.(1990–2016), which includes online databases, journals as well as reference lists of the articles. Then keywords such as organic food products, consumers' preferences and attitude towards organic consumption, consumer behaviour, buying intentions and scope for organic farming, etc. were used to find out the associated articles. Further, more than 200 articles were downloaded from various internet sites such as www.GoogleScholar.com, www.scopus.com, www.ebsco.login, www.Science direct.com and Social Science Research Network. After the minute scrutiny of each article, core articles were shortlisted which needs to be included in this review based on the criteria followed in prior reviews and also on the basis of discussion amongst the co-authors. The final sample consisted of 44 research articles, which identified the behaviour of organic food consumers, their attitudes, beliefs, purchase intention as published in journals which are either listed in the Social Science Citation Index, or in SCOPUS. As government reports are non-commercial and possess greater authenticity, a few of them were collected from websites such as United States Department of Agriculture. Research articles on related areas such as soil fertility, chemical fertilizers, Irrigation methods and various articles related to agriculture were not taken into account since the emphasis was only on organic food. Research articles were reviewed and interpreted and those which contributed to our level of understanding about organic food, consumers' attitude towards it and the satisfaction level of farmer's in producing organic food were included.

IV. LITERATURE AND THEORY

This section provides synopsis and general trends related to organic food, which enabled the study to have a general outline about the status of organic farming and its impact on the ultimate consumers:

4.1. ORGANIC FOOD AND CONSUMER ATTITUDE - AN OUTLINE

4.1.1. Organic food

According to the study of European Union, organic vegetables & fruits contains antioxidant quality which helps to reduce the risk associated with cancer and heart disease. While comparing the benefits of Organic with conventional products, reviews states that the organic food consumption have resulted in advanced resistant system, better sleeping habits, enhance taste and also controls overweight. Deprived of the use of synthetics such as chemical enrichers and insecticides, organic food helps in saving the environment and so does the animals welfare. Organic food involves the use of chemical free substances or elements such as manures, herbicides, insecticides, antibiotics, and hereditarily modified creatures. Marwa and Scott, 2013, stated that seeds used for the organic farming are not exposed to ultra violet radiations. Thus, Organic food is considered healthy as it avoids the use of synthetic chemicals in its production (Suprpto and Wijaya, 2012). Research literatures shows that many terms are used to define organic food, such as "natural," "local," "garden-fresh," and "unadulterated" (Chan, 2001). Organic farming has now turned to be a healthy alternative method of production followed by at least few number of farmers all over the world (Canavari and Olson, 2007).

4.1.2. Consumer's attitude and behaviour

Attitude is considered as the most prominent factor in the marketing of organic food products and consumers purchase intention is contributing factor in it. (Kozup et al., 2003). In the upcoming text, some of the major factors which contributes to the development of attitude and behaviour of consumers has been discussed. The existence of packaged food labels which portrays nutritional information is likely to have a solid impact on the buyer's preference, overall outlook and buying intentions. Kozup et al., 2003, proposes that consumers have a more favourable approach towards those products which displays detailed label descriptions and nutritional facts. These are some of the common efforts take by the

retailers to make the today's consumers lead a healthy way of life. Gould, 1988; Baker et al., 2004 suggests that consumers favour those products which possess high nutritional value and thereby enhance their overall health. Ethical issues constitutes another major element as it declares that consumers purchase intention is based on their two major aspects: one being their concern for the environment where they exist and the other for animal wellbeing. According to Honkanen et al., 2006, more the awareness for such issues, the more will be their chance for the consumption of healthy food. Moore, 2004 supported that suppliers are also affected by these ethical concerns because these factors are highly influential on their product's market analysis, its segmentation, profit margin, competitiveness and the net sales. Auger et al. 2003 underline on how company's products are obliged to serve the needs of the society. He believed that product's success was highly influenced by ethical consumerism, i.e. the consumers were willing to purchase those products which they consider as safe for the society. As a result of the above factors, consumer's concern for healthy food has increased over the years. Padel and Foster, 2005 claims that apart from different classifications of products, there are still deviations in drives and barriers affecting the consumer behaviour towards the purchase of organic food products.

4.1.3. Supply and demand

As per (Oger et al., 2001) in the area of organic food, there have been disparities in the supply and demand conditions. These imbalances have to be dealt in an appropriate manner to set up a firm ground for the marketing of organic food in future. Gil et al., 2000, propose that there exist a direct relationship between the supply and demand for organic products. A fall in the supply of organic commodities results in the reduced demand for such products. On the supply side, farmers are reluctant in implementing organic farming due to numerous reasons such as complicated and elaborated certification procedures, lack of financial viability, limited entry for small scale producers, controlled market size and reduction in the number of direct sales channels (Groff et al., 1993).

On the demand side, there is a need to evaluate the present literature to extract the issues such as difficulties in the extension of market, effective promotional schemes, and thereby increase the consumer's overall outlook about organic products.

4.2 FACTORS INFLUENCING THE CONSUMER'S ATTITUDE TOWARDS ORGANIC PRODUCTS

In recent years, media came up with a broad coverage on health related topics which has made consumers progressively more health conscious and they started wishing for of an improved lifestyle. Also, the rising environmental costs have upsurged the "green" consumers (Peattie and Ratnayaka, 1992). On a geographical background, the consumers of Central and Eastern European countries are demanding for safe and nourishing food items on account of increasing globalization, education and income levels (Anderson, 2000; Zakowska-Biemans, 2011). Zepeda and Li, 2007, came up with the statement that consumers does not care in paying an extra price for risk-free food. On account of the discussions above, the next section deals with the degree of extent to which these factors influences consumer's attitude and their consumption objectives.

4.2.1 Health consciousness

Olivas and R Bernabeu (2012) resolved that the organic food consumption can be considered as the effect of collaboration between following a nutritious diet, prioritising environment wellbeing and individual's sociability. He pointed out the differences in attitudes among men & women toward organic food consumption in Spain. Tomsik & Kutnohorska, 2013 concluded that the organic food consumers showed differences in attitudes, belief and behaviours in relation to health care. Most of the consumers consider their health as an important factor of their life which can be enriched through the intake of organic food products. Canavari and Olson, 2007, stated that consumers will circle up the food which are marketed as rich in nutrients and micronutrients, even if such a statement is unsupported by scientific evidence.

4.2.2. Quality and safety

Cultivation of Organic crops eliminates the use of insecticides and added crop-preserving compounds, which are injurious for human health. Thus, food safety is actively encouraged by governments, healthcare industry experts, academicians etc. (Crutchfield, Roberts and Weimer, 2000; Woteki et al., 2001). Thompson & Kidwell, 1998 advocates that the physical appearance of an organic product is directly related its skin-deep quality. As per the research done so far, Radman, 2005 claims that consumers are not dotting towards its outer appearance. While Thompson & Kidwell, 1998 argues that most people considered these effects to be insignificant while purchasing food products which are organic. Lyons, et al., 2001 considers flavour as another decisive factor for its purchase. Research shows that consumers expects organic products to have higher nutritional value and taste when compared with the normal substitutes.

4.2.3. Environmental friendliness and ethical consumerism

Consumer attitude has progressed over the years mainly due to ethical concerns towards the environment. (McEachern and McClean, 2002). McKinsey (2007) piloted an analysis and discovered that consumer's from countries such as Canada, United States, China and India are more anxious about the negative effects of using pesticides and other chemical compounds in the farms. Seyfang's (2006) stated that the safety concerns for environment is combined stimulus that in turn is directed towards ethical consumerism. Ethical consumerism comes under consumer activism which both involves procuring ethical products with low social and environmental prices and includes a moral trash of unethical products (Giesler and Veresiu, 2014). According to Cho and Krasser, 2011 committed ethical consumerism motivates users to purchase green products as part of their ethical responsibility. The increase in consumer consciousness for environmental concerns has raised the demand for environment friendly products. Gradually a transformation occurred in consumer's attitudes and purchase intentions when they realized the extent of harm caused to the environment as a result of conventional farming.

4.2.4. Willingness to pay

Inglehart and Welzel (2005) discovered that consumers are primarily concerned about two things: environment and quality of life. Hence, they may lead a more vigilant way of life due to fear, risk factors and undesirable emotions. For example, the awareness on environmental pollution and the resultant sufferings from severe reactions due to consumption of conventional food have commercialized health and environmentally friendly food consumption (Hoffmann and Schlicht, 2013). Sanjuan et al, 2003 stated that Organic food consumer are prepared to pay an amount which is similar to those existing at present. The cost of organic food has to be adjusted in order to attract more consumers. According to Lockie et al, 2004 the consumers who are willing to have natural foods always look out for organic food and involve in green consumption practice.

4.2.5. Price and certification

Lack of awareness, low financial feasibility and increased price of organic food are some of the core challenges in the route to develop a positive attitude towards organic food (Grunet and Juhl, 1995; Maguire et al., 2001; Greene and Kremen, 2003). Certification is another vital factor which inspires consumers to purchase organic food. In order to attain consumer's trust, it is important that farmers need to certify their products through government certification Also the middle to upper income groups comprises of the target market for organic food as these groups can pay higher prices (Deliana, 2012). Gil et al, 2000 recommended that if the gap in the prices between organic and conventional products are reduced it may increase the consumption for organically produced products. Consumers feel reluctant to purchase organic products due to its high price. Magnusson, et al., 2001 recommend that organic products should be priced at an amount which is lower than the regular substitutions. Padel & Foster, 2005 displays that customers expects to attain more value for each penny spend by them to validate the rising prices. Radman, 2005; Lea & Worsley, 2005 claims that customers will show a positive attitude towards the purchase of organic products if they were available at a low cost.

4.2.6. Fashion trends and unique lifestyle

Canavari and Olson 2007 states that in certain countries like Italy and United States, people consider the purchase and consumption of organic food as an indicator of their status symbol. Hence the purchase of such products turns out to be a sign of luxury and has become the latest trend among the elite class of the society. It portrayed the purchasing power and luxurious lifestyle of consumers with greater disposable income.

4.2.7. Social consciousness

Purchase behaviour, choice of media and innovation are linked to the personality of individuals (Kassarjian, 1971). It is clear that each consumer behaves differently and consumes products which suit their personality and social ranking. Certain consumers are more concerned about societal welfare, which make them anxious about their food and health selections. These aspirations inspire some noticeable consumers to purchase organic food and set an example to influence others in order to bring about a change in their consumption pattern for societal benefit (Canavari and Olson, 2007). Social influence is an extremely broad area that affects one's emotions, opinions and behaviour (Wood and Hayes, 2012).

4.2.8 Familiarity

Familiarity is mainly important while purchasing organic food for the reason that the users have no prior understanding or expertise with regard to this particular product. Low familiarity regarding the uses of the product, nutritional value derived from it, quality it possess, taste and environmental as well as social concerns are some of the critical factors which decide the consumption pattern for organic products. Magnusson et al. (2001) discovered that in spite of having a positive outlook over such products familiarity is a key determinant of why there is a declined purchase rate for organic products. Phuah et al., (2011) stated that as the consumers become more and more conscious about their health and nutritional value involved in their diet has raised the demand for green and natural food products.

4.2.9 Subjective Norms

Ajzen, 1991 defines subjective norms as the "social force which influences people to act in a particular way". Oliver and Bearden (1985) explains that these norms are purely based on the personnel choice of the one who make the ultimate decision, and also on their willingness to act as per these preferences. He concluded that subjective norms is one of the key determinant which effect peoples purchase pattern. Tarkiainen and Sundqvist (2005) suggests that there exist an interconnection concerning attitudes and buying behaviour and therefore people with positive attitudes concerning a product affects the behaviour of people around them.

V. PROPOSED AGENDA

Groff et al., 1993 states that health can one of the factor which generates a positive attitude about organic food as the public considers it as a way to prevent diseases Therefore, the healthcare industry can use this evidence and easily encourage the consumption of organic food. Moreover, health consciousness acts as the base for purchase intention for many consumers and it is positively connected with the consumer buying behaviour and attitude. Secondly, the concern for environment is another critical motivating factor and turns to be the primary cause for connecting a consumer towards organic products with a positive approach. The findings from these reviews can act as the reference for environmentalists, policy makers and non-governmental organizations to support and advance their arguments. To formulate an improved organic food market, they may well work on major characteristics such as supply chain, distribution system, facility for necessary tools and technical knowledge to farmers and obtaining certification from the government. On the basis of the findings from this review, classifications have been made on the factors which affect the consumer attitude towards organic food into three categories: Most important, Important and

Least important. These categories help to develop a framework (see Fig. 1) which allows the marketers to determine the key factors which effects the promotion of organic products.

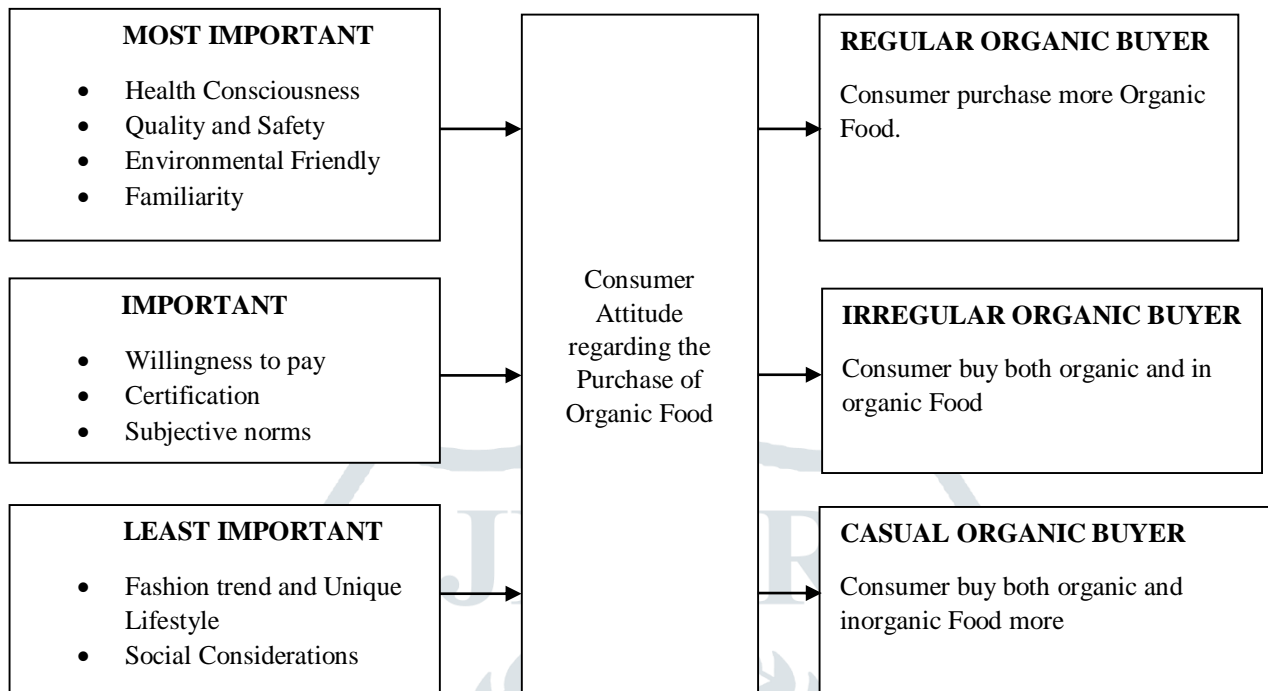


Fig.1. Classifications of factors influencing consumer attitude and their consequences:

VI. DISTRIBUTION CHANNELS

There are some relevant issues regarding the channels of distribution for organic foods such as the types of retail stores formed, the sourcing and procurement of organic food items etc. More relevant studies must be conducted to reveal the status of organic retailers and the opportunity of opening greater number of outlets for organic food. They should pay more attention in identifying the major barriers both from retailers as well as from producer's side. Find out those area which needs further improvements so that there are no flaws in delivering these produced products to the ultimate consumers.

VII. MANAGERIAL SUGGESTIONS AND STRATEGIES FOR RETAILERS

There is an urging need to discuss about the marketing and retailing activities related to organic food products. To a great extent, such activities are purely subjected to the trademark of the retailer, size of the store, space, price as well as availability of organic food at specific location. On the supply side, O'Donovan and McCarthy 2002 well thought-out availability as the critical factor of organic food in making it common among consumers. This due to the reason that consumers prefer to purchase certain food only if it is available on regular basis. Tsakiridou et al. (1999) also recommended that another barrier which refrained people from purchasing organic products was the unavailability of the needed products at the retail stores. Hence the retailers found it difficult to maintain customer loyalty. Coming to the demand side, retailers need to follow an exceptional marketing plan to make organic food widespread which will inspire them to keep an extensive variety of organic products at their stores (Harris et al., 2000). Organic food market is still an evolving, inventive market, and hence the retailers must take into account these factors while edging their marketing strategies. Some retailers can also place themselves as providers of high-quality organic food items (Sans, 2003). Through this strategy they can attract consumers who are ready to spend an extra premium to attain quality products and also expects a better shopping environment. Retailers can also open exclusive stores for high-income consumer group who wish to shop from high-class stores. Word of mouth can be a very effective tool of promotion since advertisements are comparatively expensive. Opinion leaders and Reference Groups can be identified since they are considered to be highly influential and can easily persuade many people to adopt organic life styles. Certificates for trustworthy organic food could be exhibited in the retail stores. These strategies will create a sense of demand for organic food among consumers and drive the retailers to improve the availability for organic food.

VIII. CONCLUSION

On the basis of an extensive review of these literatures, the study identifies that for a country like India that has an incredible potential for organic farming which however remains underutilised. It is recommended that through constant support from government or ruling parties to restructure the existing mechanisms and also by providing assistance to the farmers can enhance the production as well as awareness on organic products among the local buyers which in turn helps in the faster progression of organic farming.

Consumer behaviour act as a key determinant not only while purchasing organic products but also any products. Hence ways and means to maintain loyal customers should be adopted. Many areas like distribution, marketing, ethical consumerism etc. for future research that may be directly or indirectly helpful in expanding the market and increasing the reach of organic food globally. This intends to highlight that consumers in developing countries are acute to purchase organic food, which is quite popular in developed countries as well. Lack of effective distribution and promotion systems among organic products has created a major influence on the familiarity as well as on accessibility.

The marketer should be very vigilant in understanding the needs as well as to find out the major demand drivers for organic food. They should explore the unidentified factors prevents the consumers from purchasing organic food. Marketers needs to bring out innovative strategies for retaining the customers and in turn convert them into loyal customers. The perceptions of this research can be useful to the marketing managers to decide on their market segments and thereby target the potential consumers. The current research enlightens specific questions of how organic food can be made available in different retail store formats, how it can be less expensive and make them an indispensable part consumers' life.

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