
Consumers' Perception and Behaviour Towards Organic Food: Literature Review

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ABSTRACT

Consumer behaviour with regard to food consumption is changing globally, and consumers now prefer food that is produced without the use of artificial fertilisers, pesticides, or chemicals; in other words, they prefer to eat organic food, which is not only sustainable for their health but also environmentally friendly. Due to farmers' poorer production of organic produce and therefore the higher market price of organic food, customers do not favour organic items as much. People need to be made aware of the benefits of organic food items and encouraged to utilise them, but the main focus should be on encouraging farmers to choose organic farming. An investigation of customer perceptions of organic food might be helpful for the growing organic food market in India and elsewhere. Numerous insights for the study have been gained through the analysis of related literature in the market for organic foods and customer perception in that area. It has also given guidance for developing the current study. Researchers have seen the demand for organic food items both internationally and in India. Additionally, a number of variables that affect how consumers see organic food items have been found. Studies on preferences, knowledge, and contentment with organic food items have also been conducted. After reviewing a number of research and determining the gap, the investigator decided it was imperative to carry out the current inquiry.

Keywords: Organic Food Market, Organic Food Products, Consumer Perception.

INTRODUCTION

Since the beginning of time, farmers have practised organic agriculture, which abstains from the use of synthetic fertilisers, pesticides, growth promoters, and additions to animal feed. Agro-ecosystem health, including biodiversity, biological cycles, and soil biological activity, are promoted and enhanced by organic agriculture, according to the FAO/WHO Codex Alimentarius Commission's definition from 2007. It focuses on utilising natural inputs (such as minerals and products obtained from plants) and discourages using artificial fertilisers and pesticides. The fundamental principles that distinguish organic agriculture from conventional farming systems include the improvement in soil structure and fertility, the use of natural inputs, environmentally friendly techniques like intercropping, crop rotation, mulching, etc., and a commitment to sustainability. Organic farming is currently accepted in practically every nation in the globe and is growing in popularity. According to the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), organic and environmentally friendly agricultural methods are quickly replacing chemical-based agriculture as a primary source of concern on a national and international scale. The most recent assessment indicates that India has 6,50,000 organic growers and 5.2 million hectares of organic land. The majority of organic growers are located in India. A product from an organic agricultural system, which forgoes the use of synthetic pesticides and fertilisers, is referred to as organic food. The demand for organic food is rising as a result of consumers' support for this shift towards organic farming in light of their increased awareness of health risks. Consumption of organic food products is rising globally among consumers. This tendency results from consumer knowledge of environmental and health issues. The consumer's attitude towards purchasing

organic food is favourably influenced by demographic characteristics such as health, accessibility, and education. According to Paul and Rana (2012), customers are more satisfied with organic food overall than they are with inorganic. However, based on the state of affairs at the moment, the market for organic goods in India is still in its infancy, and many customers are ignorant of the advantages that come with the products and the environment we live in. The primary hurdles to purchasing organic products are their cost and lack of availability, thus marketers must concentrate on removing these obstacles in order to enter the Indian market for organic products (Laheer & Arya, 2015).

Research Design

The global impression of buying and consuming organic products has long been a source of worry, despite the fact that demand for organic food items is rising quickly. It will be crucial for producers (farmers) and retailers (business owners) to comprehend consumer perceptions and attitudes about buying organic food items in order to recognise and meet consumer demand. Since there have been several studies on organic products over the past few years, the main goal of the current study is to offer a thorough summary of consumer views of organic food items.

Objectives

The following are the precise goals of the current study, which are based on the literature review:

1. To give a thorough and up-to-date analysis of the organic food and market
2. Through academic research papers, examine several research facets that are widely prevalent in the field of consumer views of organic food goods.

Methodology

Information was acquired from numerous research publications published in reference journals as well as in internet databases relevant to the organic market in the global and Indian contexts in order to examine the comprehensive literature. The views of customers regarding organic food items were later the subject of a thorough analysis of the literature. The journals provide the excellent work of several researchers from over the world, which finally aids in doing their task in an ideal method. Additionally, an effort was made to track down references listed in a number of papers and published articles about organic food items. The majority of the information was gathered from both primary & secondary sources.

Findings

The annual market growth for organic food has been increasing globally, and in 2010 it increased by 23%. Market size for organic food was estimated at 59.1 billion US dollars. The United States (17272 acres) had the most land acquisition for organic apples in 2001. Italy, Germany, France, Switzerland, and Austria are the top producing nations of organic fruits across all of Europe (Yadav et al., 2010). According to the National Program on Organic Production 2012 report, the market for organic products is growing quickly, reaching 47% in the EU, 28% in the USA, and 28% in Canada. The market is expanding for Singapore and Italy at a steady rate as well. Although the domestic producers in these nations supply a sizable portion of this need, there is still a sizable demand for many other commodities as well as substantial amounts of the already available commodities. Opportunities will arise as a result of this supply-demand imbalance for emerging nations like India to investigate. Products made from organic food are widely used in Europe and the US. India is a key player in Asia, which is not far behind. For Indian farmers, the idea of organic food items is not new. Even though India is 1 of the top ten countries in the world in terms of the proportion of farmers that practise organic farming, there is not much domestic consumption. (Balaji and Injodey, 2017).

Both in industrialised and developing nations, there has been a notable increase in the demand for & consumption of organic food. Because consumers are getting more and more concerned about their health, this is the case. Despite making up a relatively tiny portion of the food industry, organic food has seen tremendous expansion, which has attracted the attention of both consumers and businesses as well as researchers. The impression and knowledge of organic food production in Malaysia is focused mostly on the avoidance of synthetic pesticides and fertilisers. In Malaysia, the organic food business is dealing with a number of difficulties. Although there is an increasing demand for organic food in Malaysia, the supply of locally produced organic goods cannot keep up with the growth in demand (Somasundram et al., 2014).

India's organic food market is likewise only starting to expand. The domestic demand for organic food has risen as a result of rising disposable income and rising health consciousness. According to Manaloor et al. (2016), marketing organic products to wealthy, health-conscious domestic consumers as well as export markets has

significant benefits. Unexpected growth has been seen in the organic food sector in recent years. However, at 43.16 million hectares, the proportion of certified organic agricultural land worldwide is still just about 1%. This is nearly four times the 11 million hectares of land that was used for organic farming in 1999 (Lernoud & Willer 2016). The domestic demand in developing nations has remained a barrier for the organic food market even while consumption in wealthy countries is rising. It is suggested that a number of issues hampered the domestic expansion of organic foods in emerging nations. Some of these were high cost, accessibility, brand trust, awareness of organic foods, etc. (Huang and Sangkumchaliang 2012).

Consumer Attitude & Perception Towards Organic Food Products

The way that consumers eat is continuously changing in the modern world. The organic niche industry is about to explode. Since a few years ago, there has been a surge in the manufacturing of organic goods, which has had a substantial impact on the economy. Because organic food is healthier & less likely to contain chemicals than conventional food, many people have begun to choose it over conventional food. This type of shopping behaviour is crucial in determining customer impression and attitude towards buying organic food. Additionally, a thorough assessment of past studies has allowed for the identification of the problems, concerns, and key causes.

Gender, age, income, education level, and the presence of children in the family all have a significant role in how people approach buying organic food (Magnusson et al., 2001; Wier et al., 2003). The primary drivers behind consumer preference for organic food were discovered by Hughner et al. in 2007. Concerns about nutrition and health, superior flavour, environmental protection, food safety, distrust of traditional foods, concern for animal welfare, support for the local economy, freshness, curiosity, or because they are seen fashionable are the key drivers.

People eat this kind of food for a variety of reasons, but most of them are connected to animal welfare & environmental friendliness, according to Chiciudean et al. (2012). Results show that age and gender are important influencing variables for customers. The flavour and quality of organic food are mostly praised. Price and the fashionable aspect of being "organic" have an impact on women as well. People of different ages exhibit significant variances when it comes to promotions, personal recommendations, and advertising. Adults are impacted by marketing, however children are more influenced by advertising than any other age group.

Consumer preferences for organic food are influenced by sensory factors such nutritional value, flavour, freshness, and appearance, as well as concerns about food safety, human health, and the environment, according to Shafie and Rennie's assessment of consumer views of organic food in 2012. Organic food consumption continues to be stifled by premium prices. Understanding the factors that are driving people to consume more organic food, such as motivation, is essential to realising how the market for organic food might grow.

The attitudes of consumers towards the consumption of organic food are impacted by five variables: food safety, cost, environmental friendliness, nutrition, and sensory qualities. As a consequence of environmental and health concerns, food consumption habits are constantly shifting. According to Mukul et al. in 2013, "the world's interest in organically produced food is transforming from end to end". Six key characteristics were discovered to impact people's attitudes regarding organic food, according to Mehra & Ratna (2014). They included attitudes towards eating organic food, health awareness, product information, product value, accessibility, and trust. The study's findings indicated that women and younger customers had a favourable attitude towards organic food and thought eating it was a healthier alternative. They were keen on getting product information and compared labels while selecting nutritious food. Women perceived consumption of organic food to be a healthier option.

Consumers are well aware that organic foods are healthy for their health, devoid of chemicals that might have negative side effects or hurt consumers, according to Sharma and Bali's 2014 study. Urban customers are more knowledgeable about organic food options. The consumer thinks that eating organic food contributes to maintaining an active lifestyle and lowering stress levels. This survey also discovered that respondents are prepared to pay even greater rates when it comes to health benefits. According to Sivathanu and other researchers in 2015, customers prefer to purchase organic food items because they believe these items to be safe, wholesome, and environmentally beneficial. Labels, health concerns, environmental concerns, brand advertising, brand safety, accessibility, price, freshness, and shop location were identified by Pandurangarao et al. (2017) as the top 10 reasons influencing consumers to purchase organic food. Out of them, the most important determining criteria are safety, the environment, and health. When choosing nutrient-dense foods, they were eager to compare labels and obtain product information. Women thought eating organic food was a healthier choice.

Conclusion & Recommendations

This study sought to understand how Indian consumers felt about eating organic food. It has been shown that while analysing consumer behaviour and decision-making about organically grown products, consumers' attitudes and preferences were most strongly influenced by worries about their health, safety, flavour, and environment. The availability of the market might affect consumers' preferences and decisions for buying organic food goods, according to the study review. The demand for food cultivated organically will thus increase in the future, indicating that it is imperative for producers, merchants, consumers, and the government to concentrate on this specialised sector.

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