

Consumer Perception towards Organic Foods among Private College Students: A Systematic Review

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Abstract: *In this review article we have analyzed the college going student's perception on organic food. The students listed out the points about the organic foods that they have been received from various social media. They have a very much positive thoughts about the organic foods and demanded that they used to purchase organic food somewhat frequently. But nearly 70 percent of respondents were not ready to pay more if the organic food is going to be sold out at higher prices. This is because of inefficient awareness that they received from social media about organic foods doesn't bring the importance and the nutritive value of the organic foods.*

Keywords: *organic food, consumer's perception and cost prices*

Introduction

Organic food is food produced by methods, complying with the standards of organic farming and it is the one among the fastest growing agricultural markets due to consumer's increased concern about their own health and environment. Many authors reported about crises and emergencies in worldwide on food safety and environmental issues which impact in recent decade's motivation for the purchase of organic foods. The awareness on the harmful effects of these highly pollutant contaminant food products are spreading among the consumers. As an alternative to these, more people are turning towards organic food products. Organic food consists of those agricultural food products which are not treated with chemical fertilizers, pesticides, herbicides and other synthetic chemical substances during the stages of production, processing and storage. Similarly, organic food products do not possess genetically modified materials just for attaining sustainable system of agriculture. During breeding of livestock, growth hormone, chemicals and antibiotics are not used in the organic method to increase the growth. The growth

and consumption of organic food products have been phenomenally increasing in the recent years due to the spreading of awareness (Mohamed Bilal Basha, 2015). In this present review study, college students will be used as the sample because they would have started living by themselves independently and would have had chances to make choices about what food they purchase. They are also the next largest consumer in the demographic that will soon have families and Therefore potential, if not already current organic food consumers. This review study will explore the effects of these perceptions and knowledge of organic foods on their buying habits.

Organic Foods

Organic foods are natural foods with minimum or no intervention of artificial processing to enhance or preserve the integrity of the food and are cultivated only by sustainable practices which are environment friendly. Organic producers are required to obtain unique certifications abiding to national and international standards to market produce within a country and across the borders. The increased consciousness of health hazards associated with agrochemicals and preference for safe and hazard-free food motivates the augmented consumer's consumption. The aim of this review is to obtain knowledge about consumer attitude towards organic food consumption and to analyze the attributes that change their behavior. The justification of this review is that only erudite consumer's considered environmental welfare and the idea of leading healthy lives in harmony with nature. On the other hand, the evaluation of the present state of consumer's awareness and knowledge deemed obligatory before any behavioral change is attempted. As a result, consumer's perception on organic foods, their intention and attitude and willingness to pay higher prices for organic food are reviewed.

Health Benefits of Organic Food

According to the researcher, the organic food consumption may reduce the risk of allergic disease, overweight and obesity, but residual mystifying is likely, as consumers of organic food tend to have healthier lifestyles overall. Animal experiments suggest that growth and development is affected by the type of food which they consume. (Philippe Grand jean, 2018). In organic agriculture farming, the use of pesticides is restricted, and residues in conventional fruits and vegetables constitute the main source of human exposures. Many epidemiological studies have reported that adverse effects of certain pesticides on children's cognitive development at current levels of exposure, but these data have so far not been applied in the formal risk assessments of individual pesticides. The nutrient composition differs only minimally between organic and conventional crops, with modestly higher contents of phenol compounds in organic fruit and vegetables (Johannes Kahl, 2017). According to the researcher Stefan Gunnarsson, Organic dairy products, and possibly meats also, have a higher content of omega-3 fatty acids compared to conventional products, although this difference is likely of marginal nutritional significance. Thus, organic food production has several documented and potential benefits for human health, and wider application of these production methods also in conventional agriculture.

Consumer Attitude towards Organic Food Products

In today's world consumer's food pattern is rapidly changing, the organic food is targeted intensively. It has been that from last few years the organic products production and availability in the market has been increased and made a significant development in the economy. Several people have started to consider organic food instead of conventional food because it is healthier and less prone to chemicals. This kind of purchasing behavior plays an important role among consumer attitude and perception aspect towards buying of organic food products. Further this, the issues, concern and major reasons have been identified through a broad review of earlier studies. Approach for buying organic food are mainly influenced by gender, age, income, level of education and the presence of children in the household (Magnusson et al., 2018).

Researchers have identified the main reasons for organic food consumption among consumers. The main reasons are: concerns about health and nutrition, superior taste, care for the environment, food safety, lack of trust in conventional food, care for animal welfare, support the local economy, freshness, curiosity or because they are considered trendy (Hughner et al., 2018). According to Chiciudean people consumption of various categories of foods for different reasons but most of them are related to animal welfare and environment friendly. Results indicate that the factors of influence over the consumers depend on gender and age. The organic foods are mostly appreciated for its taste and quality. Women are also influenced by price and by the trendy fact of being organic. Major differences have been noticed between people with different age regarding promotions, recommendations from acquaintances and advertising. Youngsters are more influenced by advertising than any other group of age while adult people are influenced by promotions. Consumer's perceptions regarding organic food consumption are influenced by five factors, namely food safety, price, environment friendly, nutrition and sensory attributes. Food consumption patterns are ever-changing as a result of health and environmental issues. (Mukul et al, 2013). Various studies have concluded that consumers are very much aware that, organic foods are good for health, these products are free from chemical which results in no side effects and do not cause harm to the consumer's consumption. The consumers living in urban areas are more aware about organic food products. Consumer believes that consuming of organic food helps to reduce stress level, maintain an energetic lifestyle and free from disease. Another factor this study found that, respondents are willing to pay even higher prices because of it is beneficial to get a good health. Researcher also adds and revealed that consumers prefer to buy organic food products because of their perception that the organic food products are healthy and safe, nutritious and environment friendly (Sharma, 2019). In consumer's perception, the ten features such as labels, health, concern, environment concern, brand advertising, safety, accessibility, affordability, freshness and store location as influencing factors to buy organic foods. Out of this health,

environment and safety are key factors that are found primary influencers (Pandurangarao et al. 2017).

Consumer's Perception towards Organic Food

Being environment friendly is expressed to be accessible only to the middle classes. The consumers prefer only sub state Consumers combine information about product attributes and consequences to evaluate a product and make their choices. They rely on their felt involvement which is influenced by their experience. The importance placed on each parameter is based on the consumer's priorities and values. Experience develops personal relevance, importance, interest which together derives the motivational state (Shroeder, 2015). Demographic variables as well as lifestyle and environmental attitudes define the organic consumer profile. Regular consumers of organic food tend to be educated, affluent and of higher social class (Padel and Foster, 2015). Awareness about organic food is abundant among female population. (Torjusen et al, 2017). Organic consumers are willing to pay approximately 10% premium for organic food with an average of 9.5% by women and 11.4% by men Regular consumers would pay a slightly higher premium around 15%, an average of 12.6% by women and 18% by men (Urena et al, 2016). The Spanish study also identified three groups of organic food consumers in relation to frequency of consumption namely regular, occasional and non-consumer. Regular consumers were defined as those who make purchases at least twice a week represented 12% of consumers, 42% were occasional consumers of organic food and the remaining 46% were non-consumers. Among the non-consumers, 25% were potential consumers with intention to buy organic food in the future. The gap between consumer's opinion and their actual consumption needs to be taken into account. Generally, organic foods do not use pesticides or synthetic fertilizers (Stobelaar et al, 2006). Presumably organic food contains fewer chemical residues and veterinary drugs compared to conventional food. Environmental contaminants however are likely to be found in food of both productions. Organic food contains only one-third of pesticides that conventional food does (Baker et al, 2017). It can be said that lower exposure translates into lower risk. In conventional food, almost all produce will have pesticide residue below the statutory

maximum limits. Consumers express anxiety on agrochemicals, hormones and medicine in animal production, Genetically Modified foods and artificial additives in fruits and vegetables (Naspetti and Zanolli, 2016). With respect to absence of pesticides and fertilizers in organic production, organic fruits and vegetables have more biochemical energy to synthesise beneficial secondary plant metabolites such as poly phenols and antioxidants (winter and Davis, 2006). Nutritional content is a quality aspect that consumers link to personal health. High content of vitamins, more nourishing meals and a healthy diet were reported as reasons for purchasing organic foods by 4%-7% of regular organic food consumers (Sathya, 2016). Consumers who are concerned about natural foods, the sensory and emotional appeal of foods and more likely to engage in green consumption practices are more likely to have greater consumption of organic foods (Ramya et al, 2016). Women were identified to have higher health consciousness and were seen as innovators for change towards healthier diets with their important roles in shaping a family diet (Wandel, 2019). They are also more health-conscious about the implications of chemical residues and preservatives (Yiridoe et al, 2015). Women are more committed to natural foods and environmental values and the fairness of paying a premium for environmental good. Higher vitamin C content was found in organic food compared to conventional food (Soil Association, 2016). Inconsistent findings were recorded on the comparison of sensory qualities of organic foods to conventional foods (Bourn and Prescott, 2017). Consumers described that organic orange juice tasted better than conventional orange juice and no difference was described between organic and conventional milk (Fillion and Arazi, 2018). In recent years, organic food has been attaining a growing consumer demand. A number of reasons have driven this organic food market trend. The British consumers perceived organic food as a means of achieving individual and social values for themselves and their families. The most significant motive for choosing organic food is the health factor followed by the environmental and animal welfare factors. Some consumers buy organic food as they observe a difference in food quality. Few specific parameters expressed are sensory parameters, followed by safety and nutrients

(Bordeleau et al, 2016). Animal's biological function and performance improve slightly when they are fed with organically produced feed (Magkos et al, 2017). The interpretation of this finding must be made with caution and any extrapolation to human should consider metabolic and physiological difference between animals and humans. Opposing attitude and value towards GM food implies a positive view on the organic, especially when they are mentioned together. GM food is seen as manipulative and altering the nature while organic food is seen to preserve the 'naturalness' of the environment (Dreezen et al, 2015). Composting food wastes and consumption of locally produced food are among the most commonly food-related environmental behaviour specified by consumers compared to consumption of organic food. Awareness on the organic food consumption needs to be raised and the barriers need to be overcome. The link between health and environmental benefits should be strengthened to increase interest among consumers (Magnusson et al, 2013).

Consumers' Willingness to Pay for Organic Food

Price premium is the additional percentage charged on organic food when compared with the price of conventional foods. Numerous claims are made about the goodness of organic food, in order to justify the premium price that consumers have to pay (Fillion and Arazi, 2002). Researchers justified that the price premium for organic foods; the most important was food safety, followed by nature conservation and taste. Some consumers simply assume that they cannot afford organic food and some feel that the market often charges more for healthier food (Whitehead and Nicholson, 2016). The willingness of people across the global too reflects the same as it happens in India. Especially, in countries like Spain the consumers are willing to purchase the organic food only if it is being sold out as similar prices as the other commercial products used to price up. Similarly in USA, Consumers doesn't show any interest in purchasing organic foods for higher prices due to which the production of organic vegetables and fruits in USA got minimized (Werner, J., & Alvensleben, R.V. 2011). When the farm-gate price is low for a particular conventional food product, for example cereals, the organic price premium for cereals is also low. In countries

where general food suppliers like major supermarkets are actively marketing organic food, the price premium is usually lower. One possible factor is lower distribution cost because organic food can be transported together with conventional food. The growing organic market need to be identified based on market data from over several years to project market development and finding a solution to reduce the price gap of organic food and conventional food. The consumers of organic food tend to be older, come from tertiary-educated household and have higher income than those not purchasing organic food (Roitner-Schobesberger et al, 2008). Therefore, it was suggested that willingness to pay for organic food increases with age and income. On the contrary found that age and income have very little influence over the level of organic consumption, too found that consumer socioeconomic characteristics are not very relevant compared to lifestyles and attitudes towards environmental issues. A Norwegian Researcher study also found no significant effect of income or occupation on the interest of consuming organic food (Wandel and Bugge, 2015). A very minimum population at Canada claimed that they used to pay more for organic meats as they are more concern with their health where they doesn't matter about money. A Spanish researcher reported that there are two types of consumers prevailing in their city it seems they are "incidental buyers and heavy buyers". The incidental buyers are the one who used to show concern on environment and heavy buyers are the one who show concern on their health so these two types of buyers are the one who show some willingness in purchasing organic food at premium prices. In addition, consumers sometimes relate feelings of good conscience and responsibility for the well-being of family with organic food purchase decisions (Arvola et al, 2018). The researcher examined that the role of affective and moral attitudes as motivators of organic food in the context of the "Theory of Planned Behavior". It was found that affective and moral measures have a considerable role in predicting intentions to purchase organic food. Self-rewarding and the feeling of doing something good for the environment seem to be appropriate to understand the intentions of buying organic food. Therefore, a moral dimension provides another justification in increasing the marketing of organic food.

Satisfaction of consumers with their current purchase may also become a barrier to purchasing organic food (Roddy et al, 2016). The consumers do not think that organic food is any better, so why bother paying more for food that they can obtain at a cheaper price. The integration of environmental concern in EC agricultural policy, production and marketing of high-quality food is increasing. Organic food will continue to be produced but still most food will be produced as natural as possible, with less pesticide but not strictly organic. The food may be easier to produce and less expensive providing a major threat to organic food. Consumers who already buy organic food, on the other hand can be encouraged to increase their frequency of purchasing by improving the availability and sensitivity to food quality and market preferences (J Environ et al, 2018)

Conclusion

Consumption of Organic Foods have increased over the past few years due to the elevating need for people to be healthy and thereby increasing the interest of the consumers. The increase in consumers' interest in organic food products has been attributed among other issues to the growing demand for food free from pesticides and chemical residues. The main barrier of organic foods market share is the information available and consumer awareness (Sangkumchalianga and Huang, 2012). It can be concluded from the study that there is lack of awareness on Organic Foods among the selected category. Though the subjects are educated and are young futures of India, their level of understanding the need for use of organic foods is less. This has developed a hesitation to pay more for organic foods. When health should be preferred over rate, these students prefer rate over all other aspects. Due to lack of knowledge, awareness and understanding, there is no stable perception on the Organic Foods. It is understood that age and educational qualification doesn't decide the knowledge of organic foods and also advertisements go unnoticed most of the time prioritizing money. Concern towards health also seems to be lacking in these subjects.

Citation

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