

Consumer Awareness about Organic Food

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ABSTRACT: The recent trend towards the purchasing organic food is growing among the people due to the harmful effects of chemicals present in food products available in the market. The study that says to identify what actually induces consumer to turn towards organic food is the most important factor. The prices of organic foods are relatively higher as compared to the conventional food items. The major fact is the quantity of production of organic foods is low than the general foods at a given harvest cycle. Some of the motivating factor is to purchase organic foods which include health environmental concern life style product quality. This empirical study is identifying the purchase intention of consumers towards organic foods.

KEYWORDS- Organic Food, Purchase Intention, Consumer Attitude, Consumer Perception

I. INTRODUCTION

With the advent of globalization, many things and their usage have changed in the present world. Among them, food habits are one thing that has taken excise with modernization and globalization. People are consuming fast and junk foods that have poor proper nutritional value which lot of fats and carbohydrates. But, recently a growing population has raised questions about organic foods. This interest has promoted an increase in organic agriculture and also researches. The curiosity has caused a change in consumer behavior towards use of organic foods. This can be attributed to factors such as recession, inflation and income level of people to select their consumption of food. But today organic food industry is one of the fastest growing food industries. Food consumption over the years has developed into a growing concern for people and for government. Effective attention is being placed to the use of food that not only improves people's health but also leads to sustainability of the environment. Thus, the future of organic foods depends largely on consumer demand and as such an effective analysis for consumer perception towards organic food is highly needed.

The present report analyzed the attitude of people towards the consumption of organic foods. This will give proper idea based on historical factors along with the current tastes and preferences of people towards organic food and also takes into analysis consumer's perception and their willingness in purchasing organic food.

ORGANIC FOOD

Food is something that humans consume for their health and well-being. Organic food is stated as which is produced and developed using natural processes and environment friendly technology. Organic foods include foods products which are obtained from natural environments of agriculture and poultry using natural ingredients. Organic food is associated with terms such as green foods, biological foods and natural production (Baker G.A. and Burnham T.A. 2001). Basically it is the less or limited use of artificial components in agriculture. Vindigni et al., (2002) connect organic foods with process claim and not product claim, which shows the relevancy of the use of natural processes and ingredients yielding high productive.

Organically produced foods are sometimes associated with acceptance of goods. The high quality gives organic foods qualities which are difficult to detect and it plays an important role for the buyer to choice a product. For organic food to be called as credibility good, the reference here is to products' inherent characteristics. Consumer's decision to buy organic foods is influenced by their perceptions about the qualities and characteristics of organic food and it is not certain that they will associate organic food with its production process.

According to Giannakas K. (2002), consumers may not know or detect the qualities or attributes of organic food even after its consumption. They will only know that it is organic food when they are told. Now, the characteristic of organic food can be grouped into two broad categories in terms of their consumption value to conventional consumers. First is general attributes which relates to food safety, human health, environmental impacts and aspects related to welfare of farm animals. Second category is commodity specific attributes which include certain

specialized factors such as nutritional value, visual appeal, freshness, taste and many other characteristics. This is considerable definition for accepting the organic foods, because consumers may not be able to differentiate organic foods in terms of their general attributes but they might value organic foods in terms of their taste, freshness, visual appeal or certain particular products.

Consumer Awareness And Knowledge About Organic Food

Today's current generation is health cozy very specific about what they consume daily and life style. They understand their daily intake and their body requirements. In case of organic foods, with rise of modern facilities and more social interaction, consumers are aware about organic food but there is a clear misunderstanding about the definition of organic foods. According to Baker G. (2001), for people and their awareness towards organic foods, food which are pesticide free, have no artificial fertilizer content and no growth regulators are called organic. The mind-set that organic foods are chemical free foods is a very narrower term and this can be greatly attributed to consumer awareness and knowledge about organic foods.

Looking at the awareness level of consumers about organic food, it can be said that consumers are not much aware about organic foods and also its benefits. There is a certain degree of knowledge but consumers do not fully understand the role and benefits of organic foods in their life. Coming to its agricultural practice, consumers are aware of the broad issues which marginalize its use but they tend to neglect the benefits of the organic foods, its farming practices and qualities. Sometimes, this is a case of clear misrepresentation and mislabeling which raises some form of mislead the minds of consumers. Another clear reason is the lack of government initiatives, regular standards and certification procedures. These are the most common factors which create a sense of hold back in the mind of consumers about the use of organic foods.

Consumers need to understand the characteristics of organic foods and also its benefits to increase their use over normal foods. Organic foods are something which may not be fully chemical free because of high manure content but are grown intensively and naturally. This confuses the consumer and adds to his personal choice for organic foods. This then influences the consumer and starts to associate organic food with labels. Many consumers today determine organic foods

based on their logo and label. It is the believed that a labeled product is of good quality and authentic in its organic factor. This allows the consumer to evaluate the product and base its choice for consuming organic food.

DIFFERENCE BETWEEN ORGANIC FOOD AND NORMAL FOOD

A lot of the consumer's behavior towards use of organic food is depended on their general perception. Few consumers think that organic foods are better than normal foods in terms of their uniqueness and superiority and that is why they purchase organic foods. There are other consumers who think that organic foods are not superior or better than normal foods. Thus, this certainly brings consumer preference directly with their perception and continues the fact about their superiority and characteristics from normal foods. Some of the most common differentiating factors between organic foods and normal foods are provided below.

- i. Nutritional value
 - Consumer choice is relatively high for pesticide free foods.
 - The fact that organic food contents higher mineral, more vitamin C and low nitrate.
- ii. Food safety
 - People generally believe that organic foods will have less chemical and microbial contents than normal food.
- iii. Sensory perceptions
 - Appearance of the food is also considered to be an important factor in consumer choice.
 - Taste, shelf life and freshness also contribute towards sensory enhancement of people.
- iv. Production & price
 - All the above differences factors increase in choice for organic food.
 - But there are certain other factors which shift the preference towards normal food.

All of the above differences factor increase in choice for organic foods, but there are certain other factors which shift the preference towards normal foods. The most important difference which influence choice of normal food over organic food is the methods and experiments attributed to organic foods. Also the fact of harvest maturity conditions and storage facilities can alter perceptions of consumers. Crop variety, soil type, duration of experiment, climate, statistics and post-harvest conditions also impact the choice of consumers for normal goods over organic foods (Ifad.org, 2015). Also an important fact is the quantity of production of organic foods is less compared to normal foods at a given harvest cycle

(Ifad.org, 2015). All these factors describe the difference between organic and normal foods and their impact on consumer choice.

Consumer's Attitude And Perceptions

Consumer's attitude consists of ideas, actions, experiences and feelings of consumers with complementary factors like prices, advertisements and recommendations. Consumer perception is very prone to changes and is very dynamic. A continuous change in activities leading to change in perception and ideas motivates consumer's choices and preferences. Consumer's response to different types of marketing strategies is also a key factor in their choice for organic foods.

There are certain key issues that considerably affect consumer's attitude towards organic foods. According to one of researcher the consumer's attitude and perception should be analyzed based on three factors, which are affect and cognition, behaviour and environment, and also the effective relation between each of them. Affect represents the emotional feeling of consumers towards a product and cognition represents its mental assumption such as analyzing, interpreting and evaluating. For example, a consumer may like a product but may not actually purchase the product based on its cognitive evaluation. Consumer behaviour relates to the effect of various marketing activities on the consumer which can be measured in qualitative and quantitative terms. Environment is consumer environment such as his surroundings and the effect it has on his purchasing.

It all comes down to relevance of organic foods in the normal food habits of people, which until people consider it as conventional food, will not succeed in its motive. Organic fruits and vegetables totally dominate the organic consumer market. But consumers do not consider other organic foods like organic meat as normal goods. Consumers also do not consider them as luxury goods. The attitude of people is the key towards increasing use of organic foods in their normal diet.

Consumer attitude towards organic food is also affected by the fact that some consumers view organic foods as an alternative to normal foods and vice-versa. This creates a feeling of casualness among consumers that they do not need organic food when they have normal foods with the same value offering and lesser price. This brings an attitude and they also convince others to percept the same, leading to reduced favoritism for organic foods.

CONSUMER'S WILLINGNESS TO BUY ORGANIC FOOD

One of the most significant factors for a consumer to buy organic food is health and safety. Today's human is very health conscious and understands the benefits of good health. This certainly motivates people to use organic foods. When people observe that their health is deteriorating then they feel a need to buy organic foods which conserve health. Thus, the willingness to buy good and health organic food arises and people view it more as an investment towards their own health.

Consumer's attitude towards use of organic foods and acceptance of organic farming depends a whole lot on their purchasing power. Now, the prices of organic foods are relatively higher than conventional food items and sometimes this is a clear objection to the use of organic foods for the less rich people. The portion of people who are ready to pay a high price for these organic foods is relatively less. This shows that price and income level also play an important role in the willingness of consumers to buy organic foods. Demand for organic foods is more in direct relation with the price of conventional foods, with people opting for those foods instead of organic foods only because of price differentiation.

Consumer's knowledge and attitude about organic food might not necessarily lead to purchase of organic food. There are certain barriers which limit this choice. More number of consumers is getting involved in the use of organic foods and also the official label adds to the growing indifference for organic foods. Certification and standardization is a key factor influencing willingness of consumers because consumers demand knowledge about organic foods being organic. This factor needs to satisfy the first attributes which then will translate to consumer willingness for organic food.

Factors Affecting Consumers Attitude

- i. Demographics & personal choices-
 - Family structure has also effects on consumptions habits.
 - Children's are effects on changing buying decisions.
- ii. Consumer motivation-
 - People need & motivations are connected to each other.
 - Motivations start up behavior and direct to a goal or a specification.
- iii. Learning & knowledge-
 - Scientist thought that almost all behavior is learnt.

- Learning is gained by experience.
 - Companies have to examine consumer's knowledge about product.
- iv. Social class-
- Social class & their needs are continuously changing rapid.

II. CONCLUSION

The fact that organic food is better than normal or conventional foods is not given importance in the current scenario. Factors influencing this thought must be counter with effective awareness program about organic foods and its health benefits. For consumer behavior to change, government and organizations will need effective strategies to highlight the importance of organic food over normal general food available in local markets. For consumers, who understand the benefits, price will not be a factor as they value their health and food safety. Overall awareness on organic food is increasing among the population. Public attitude towards purchase intention must be positive. Consumer behavior involves the psychological process and is the key to the impact that society has on the environment. Thus, these all facts conclude that organic food is better than normal food.

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