



ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS AFFECTING CONSUMER BEHAVIOR TOWARDS ORGANIC FOOD PRODUCTS

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ABSTRACT

This paper is about the environmental factors which are affecting consumer behavior towards organic food products. An agricultural sustainable development is possible with organic farming and production. Because, use of pesticides and fertilizers on soil which affect the land, threat to biodiversity and inadequate system of solid waste disposal. Organic food production system meets the needs of the present and also can meet the future need. Now days, people started buying products which are safe, nutritional value, healthy, etc. Organic food production keep away the use of all fabricated chemicals, does not cause any contamination. Organic Production will lead to sustain the environment for long period. It produces food with ecological balance to prevent soil fertility.

KEY WORDS: *Organic food, environment, price, lifestyle, awareness and attitude*

INTRODUCTION

Agriculture is the base of our country. Organic food market is growing continuously over the past decade. The natural resources have to be sustained for future generation also. Consumer behavior keeps on changing based on various factors. The environmental factors have more impact on consumer behavior. Organic agriculture not only preserves the environment, but also less harmful substances and improves health, bringing significant benefits.

Consumers and Ecological Balance

1. Consumer concern for ecology is directly related to their willingness to buy organic foods. Although not a priority issue, has a significant effect on consumption of organic food (Kristensen and Grunert, 1991; Tregear et al., 1994; Von Alvensleben, 1998; Schifferstein and Oude Ophuis, 1998). Organic foods are obtained by means of environment-friendly production and processing, so that environmental concern is

expected to have positive effects on purchase of these products. People who have a greater concern for health and environment about organic food have a higher purchase frequency. Consumers were impressed with organic food industries because of environment and safety. Organic food motives the ecological welfare (which include animal welfare and environment protection). Every individual must take personal efforts for ecological welfare and the world. Farmers also benefited from organic food production. Farmers are following ethical attributes, for regional production and fair prices. Organic food quintessence relies on a balanced environment, health and social benefits that are recognized at the EU level through its main regulations. Romania health & environment aspects are increasing. Present in consumer decision process. It contributes more to environment protection than conventional food. Consumers who understand the contribution of organic food



to environment protection show concern for ecology & environment. People started showing interest in using organic fruits and vegetables.

2. There are many aspects which are responsible for the difference in behavior amongst the customers. Customers can be from different countries, thus can have different traditions. Each and every individual have a unique lifestyle. Armstrong and Kotler (2007) stated in one of their articles that the environment in which an individual grew up, their surroundings, culture traditions all play a vital role in building up their behavior, i.e. the way they act, talk, socialize, communicate etc. Corporations thus appoint experts who have knowledge on different cultures. If the corporations want to target customers in general they should keep in mind that they have to redesign their strategy and make products that can be used by individuals from all countries. Solomon(2002) gave an example in regards to the matter in discussion; in some stores frozen or canned foods are sold, which resembles the American mode of life. In America both parents work, a result they don't always have sufficient time to cook or eat home cooked meals. Customers purchase goods so that their life can get a bit easier with the help of the purchased good; and they do so with a way of thinking that they are negotiating with their difficulty with the help of the goods purchased. There is a concern among consumers to preserve resources for generations of the future, problems associated with safety of food. Consumers in general concur that they preferred to buy organic products because this would save the environment while supporting local small farmers. In America, the mode of life is different from India. Both parents go for work and their way of seeing life is different. Indians save time to cook and eat homemade meals instead of packed food. Perseverance of resources for the future generation is the environmental concern which is lacking in India. Foreign countries are standing in top position for preserving nature. Understanding the culture of various countries is important because it affect their behavior.
3. Mc Kinsey (2007) piloted an analysis and discovered that consumers from countries such as Canada, United States, china and India are more anxious about negative effects of using pesticide and other chemical components in the farms. Seyfang's (2006) stated that the safety concerns for environment is a 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 for unethical products (Giesler and Veresiu, 2014). 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 harm caused to the environment as a result of conventional farming. Research hypothesis: The more is the people's belief that organic products are environmental friendly, greater will be their willingness to buy the product. The foreign countries are aware about the effects of using fertilizers and pesticides. They have more concern for their environment and spread the consciousness for environmental concerns. Still in India, there are some cities and villages having no awareness about organic food. In India, most of the people do not have complete knowledge about the environment & ecology. This leads to environmental issues. The companies have to concentrate on environmental concern & promote the organic food products to sustain for long period. Companies have to be socially responsible. This will help them in the long run. Government has to take necessary steps to promote organic products by helping the farmers to get good returns for their products.
4. Environmental concerns provide a degree of awareness among individuals to solve environmental problems. Individual's concern for the environment is related to their friendly behaviors with the nature. It seems that citizens and various organizations and institutions around the world have been concerned with environmental issues for more than a few decades. During this period, the world has witnessed a considerable increase in



activities promoted by environment protection groups that focus on preventing environmental damage (Chegini & Saleh, 2016). In recent years, environmental and social issues have gained special importance in purchasing decisions made by consumers. Society's concern about the environment has led to the emergence of a new type of consumers that reflect these concerns in their purchasing decisions. Responsibility in dealing with environmental issues not only helps organizations to remain competitive and increase their market shares but also there is evidence indicating increased consumer loyalty toward such organizations (Chegini & Saleh, 2016). Therefore, environmental concerns play a key role in determining the intention to purchase organic food, so that the purchases of organic food are considered environmentally friendly behaviors (Yadav & Pathak, 2015). Although environmental awareness measurement is difficult, knowledge is recognized as the basis for environmental beliefs (Barber et al., 2009). Chen (2009) in Malaysia investigated the existence of environmental concerns and found out that this variable played a significant role in consumer's environmental behaviors. Companies are not coming forward to deal with environmental issues because consumers are not concerned about the issue. Lack of knowledge is one of the main reason for the consumers who do not have environmental concern. Dealing with environmental issues will create awareness among consumers and will create good impression about a company and it will increase the intention to purchase their products. The purchase of organic products or green products to preserve the environment and maintain the health of individuals and society has become one of the essential issues in Iran. Government and companies in Iran have not been serious about this issue so far and the production and consumption of organic products have not been well-established in the society. To prevent the occurrence of any type of illness caused by consuming processed food products and having harmful chemical fertilizers for the health of individuals and the environment the production and consumption of organic foods

have been used as one of the necessary solutions in some countries of the world. According to the results, government officials, food firms and marketers are faced with a significant. The government also have started initiating the purchase of organic food products in Iran. Many countries around the world are having awareness about organic and preserve nature. India has to start initiating the usage of organic food and the government has to take necessary steps to promote organic products by supporting the farmers.

5. Consumer attitude has evolved over the years primarily due to ethical concerns towards the environment (McEachern and McClean, 2002). It is known that environmental concerns and social norms help in shaping and predicting individual behavior (Berkowitz, 1997; Laroche et al., 2001, Paul et al., 2016). Although some studies have given less importance to social norms in predicting human behavior (Krebs, 1970; Marini, 1984; Krebs and Miller, 1985), Schwartz (1973, 1977) found that social norms and environmental concerns have developed a feeling of moral obligation and created a positive attitude among consumers towards environment. This evolution has fostered the development of "eco-friendly products," also known as "green products," which has paved the way for organic food in developed markets such as USA and Germany (Ottman and Terry, 1998). Ethical consumerism falls under the umbrella of consumer activism which either involves purchasing ethical products with low social and environmental costs or institutes a moral boycott of unethical products (Giesler and Veresiu, 2014). Practicing ethical consumerism inspires consumers to buy green products in order to fulfill their ethical responsibility (Cho and Krasser, 2011). For many brands, the fact that the use of the green element and green innovations can improve the attitude of consumers toward them is positive news (Olsen et al., 2014; Kouba, 2003; Seyfang, 2006). Each consumer should have the responsibility of buying organic food products. Social norms and environmental concern have a positive attitude to buy organic food products. Ethical Consumerism



is very important which will increase the demand for organic food product in future.

6. According to Dunlap and Jones (45), environmental concern denotes “the degree to which people are aware of problems regarding the environment and support efforts to solve them or indicate the willingness to contribute personally to their solution” (p.482). In general, consumers who are concerned about the environment tend to develop positive environmental attitudes, express willingness to pay more for eco-friendly products and exhibit pro-environmental behavior(46,47). It is widely acknowledged that the production and consumption of food products, especially meat such as beef and pork, contribute to air pollution, land and water scarcity, and domestic waste to the ecosystem, leading to environmental degradation(48). Environmental concern therefore appears to be a driving factor of organic food purchase behavior, and this has been largely attributed to being environmentally friendly(17). Squires et al.(49) suggest that organic food buyers express interest in protecting the ecology and natural production process. Empirical studies conclude that environmental concern exerts a positive influence on attitude towards organic food purchases in both developed and developing countries such as Australia (13), Taiwan (50) and India (11). Based on the above discussion, the following hypothesis has been developed: H1 : Consumers’ environmental concern has a positive impact on their attitudes towards buying organic food. This study is among the first of its kind that comprehensively investigated factors influencing consumer attitude and purchase of organic meat in the context of Vietnam. The findings highlighted the attitude-behavior gap associated with pro-environmental behavior and organic food consumption. This gap can be partially explained by the negative impact of price barriers on consumer purchase behavior. The findings also concluded that whilst environmental concern has the greatest influence on attitudes towards purchasing organic food, knowledge about organic food has the weakest impact on such attitudes. These recent findings extended current knowledge about organic food purchase in

emerging markets as well as provided governmental organizations, marketers and socio-environmental organizations with valid suggestions on how to foster and enhance consumer attitudes and behavior towards organic food products, including organic meat. Organic food market is emerging and there is better opportunity for organic shops in future. Government and socio-environmental organizations have to play a major role in changing the behavior of consumers towards organic food products.

7. Environmental concerns play an important role on consumers’ intention to purchase green products. Thus, environmental concerns are not the only factor for the consumers to purchase environmentally friendly products. There are other factors that lead to the purchases. The results suggest that a large number of consumers in the selected areas value the environment and have a typical buying behavior. The consumers prefer organic food products for their survival. This indicates green product awareness among consumers. As consumers are aware and concerned about the green products, it creates an opportunity for developing green marketing focusing on more consumers. Overall, this study clearly identified a positive relationship between the variables or factors which affect consumers’ buying behavior for green products. Consumers’ buying behavior acts as a predictor and have a direct influence on the decision process when purchasing of organic food products. The results provide reasonable support to all the hypothesized relationships. It was also identified that while consumers have positive behavior towards purchasing organic food products, when it comes to actual purchase, price, environmental concerns and quality are still the key factors influencing their purchase decisions. Environmental concern must be the first prioritized factor in selecting the organic food. More awareness campaigns are organized, conventional products existed in the market and consumers have the choice to select organic food. When they have an opportunity to buy organic food, consumers were utilizing it.
8. The level of ecological concern among the consumers is related to their intention to



purchase green products (Amyx et al., 1994). It can affect the consumption of organic foods directly although it may not be a priority issue (Schifferstein & Oude Ophuis, 1998). Consumer environmentalism can be defined as the environmental concern level and stewardship of the consumer to make product purchase decisions. This factor can be the most significant predictor of consumer behavior. Besides, consumers understand that the goods that are produced in natural ways will not harm the environment. They know that by purchasing and consuming organic foods, they can help to reduce nature contamination, defend the health of soil and water as well as reduce the use of chemical instruments in agriculture activities Saleki and Seyedsaleki, 2012. Hence, it is clear that there is a positive relationship between consumers who are concerned about mother earth and the intention to purchase organic products. Ecological concern and buying organic food will reduce nature contamination, reduce soil erosion and maintain the ecological balance. Prevention is better than cure. Our elders lived a beautiful life with organic food items +without naming it as organic and they lived long and healthy. Simply following the eating habits of our elder will do. Moreover, organically produced foods are then regarded as less damaging to the environment than conventional foods (Schifferstein & Oude Ophuis, 1998; Williams & Hammit, 2001). This can then be used to explain the reasons for environmental concern as one of the factors in purchasing organic foods (e.g. Schifferstein & Oude Ophuis, 1998; Loureiro et al., 2001). The consumers can then know the benefits when they are consuming the organic foods due to increasing concern about food security and environmental issues. And, based on Krause (1993) in his research paper, the finding was that the consumers were now becoming more concerned about how their daily habits impact on the environment. Organic products will preserve the society and the environment when compared with the conventional products. Organic produced goods will not harm the soil and environment, these food are secured one and never harm the human health. People started recognizing the need for organic food to live healthy and

started saving the environment for the future generation.

CONCLUSION

Awareness about organic food product is spreading across the country but still due to some factors people were not purchasing the product completely. The marketers want to try to reduce the factor which is affecting the consumer in buying organic food products. Environmental concern and protection is one among the vital part of buying organic food. But still there are consumers who were not aware about environmental protection and harming the society by using products which is not convertible or reuse able. The government and the organizations have to safeguard our environment with the society by protecting the nature for future generation.

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