

Consumer buying Behavior and Attitude towards Organic Food Products: A Study of Jalgaon District

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to explore the influence of organic food products on consumers mind and attitude on their buying intention. Buying Organic food products is a growing sector in Maharashtra. In the recent years a domestic market for Organic food products has developed as consumers are more and more concerned about the risks resulting from retail shopping. Our lifestyle has changed in this fast paced world as compared to few decades ago. Today, more and more people are caught up in an endless cycle of buying and throwing away, seeing consumption as a means of self-fulfillment.

Growing consumer concern for safe and healthy food as well as an increased environmental awareness, especially in larger cities has shifted the demand towards alternative health products. Different labeling programs for “safe food” were established.

Consumption is the reason why anything is produced. Demand towards products is driven by convenience and habit which in returned is hard to change. Truly consumers has little knowledge of the link between their consumption choices and the environmentally consequences. Malaysia which is at the intermediary stage of development is facing with tremendous challenge in ensuring sustainable development. According to Aini M.S, (2003) solid domestic waste is one of the major environmental problems facing by the municipalities in the country particularly in the urban area.

Introduction

Organic products are a rapidly growing area of the food and beverage sector worldwide. According to prepared foods magazine Organic foods are selling five times faster than traditional foods at the supermarket with US sales estimated at 22 billion by 2010 despite the 20 – 35% price premium of these items. Over 60% households say they use Organic Products at least occasionally this seems to be similar to the trend in Europe and Canada. India among the world’s most populous countries and second fastest growing economies in the world is seen to be where the action is likely to be in this decade. There is also a lot of interest domestically in the Indian Market for the committed organic veterans, Businesses, farmers as well as the Government. What then is the potential for Organic products in India? India is not new to the concept of Organic. Indian traditional agriculture systems have applied for a long time many of the principles of Organic farming. Given the trend of decreasing prices for agriculture products and income stability for farmers, Organic farming may well prove to be an important way to stabilize the income of the farming community.

Organic agriculture is practiced in almost all countries of the world & its share of agriculture land & farms is growing. The total organically managed area is more than 24 million hectares worldwide. There is huge demand organic food in developed countries like U.S.A. & European countries. This market of organic product is expected to grow globally in the coming years & high growth rates over the medium term (from 10-15 to

25-30 %) are expected. but this market is not very well known to most farmers, living in the developing countries. There are numerous initiatives by farmer groups, NGOs and corporate bodies producing organically and selling the products on domestic and international market. In addition to improved food quality and environment, reduced production costs, stabilized yields and increased farmers' income especially in marginal production regions are considered high under the Indian scenario. In 2000, the Indian Government started to promote organic agriculture on various levels. Under the National Programmed for Organic Production (NPOP) standards, accreditation criteria and a national organic logo have been launched. In 10th five year plan about Rs.100 Crores earmarked for the promotion of organic agriculture. The main components of this initiative include farming of standards, negotiating with different countries and putting in place a system of certification of organic products. With all these initiatives India will surely emerge as a leader in organic food production and export.

Need and prospect of organic food

Because of the growing demand for take-out foods, foodservice establishments have no choice but to react (Foodservice & Packaging Institute, Inc., 2007). The challenge however is to find containers that keep the food hot, and are cost effective. Containers used by traditional quick service restaurants (QSRs) hold foods that are frequently consumed in the car or the parking lot, while curbside to go concepts need packaging that will keep the food quality intact until the consumer arrives home (Swartz, 2004). Before Applebee's began its curbside service, the company conducted focus groups to determine what the consumer wanted from take-out packaging. What was discovered was that the chain's existing white polystyrene clamshell containers did not keep food hot, tended to leak, and were damaged easily with sharp utensils (Sheridan, 2003). The current containers, heavy plastic bases with clear, sealable lids, cost the company far more than did the competitively priced clamshells, but they are also functioning on several levels: as a means to support the integrity of the product, as a marketing tool, and to reproduce the upscale nature of the restaurant's table settings in the consumer's home (Shea, 2004).

Consumer actions regarding organic products stem people to question modern agricultural practices in from attitudes that in turn linked to a complex set of ideas, response to concerns about conventional agricultural motivations and experiences. Most of previous practices, food safety, human health concerns, and studies concluded that consumers purchase organic and environmental safety interests in organically products because of a perception that such products are These concerns along with observed organic consumer conventionally produced alternatives. behavior has led to emergence of various groups of Those studies designate how consumers perceive the organic consumers, namely environmentalists, food organic concept, examining issues related to the demand phobic's, healthy eaters, humanists, welfare enthusiasts for organic products, consumer attitudes and the factors and hedonists that facilitate or hinder the acceptance of these The most common definitions of an organically products. The organic purchasing motives should be produced food emphasize product practices and attribute to some environmental, ethical, quality, health principles used and the 'organic philosophy' consciousness and exploratory products buying Thus, while some definitions highlight dimensions such behavior, as well as to specific products attributes such as 'bio- fair' or 'natural product systems' and 'green' as nutrition, value, taste and price or 'environmental friendliness', others emphasize the Other consumer surveys demonstrate

that, the major limited use of artificial chemicals in organic products motive for buying organic products seems to be health, or its general philosophy . According to related Environmental concerns are apparently This study attempted to gain knowledge about consumer attitude towards organic food product consumption and to see whether there is any potential this might have for changing their behaviour. The rationale for carrying out this project is that no possibility of any products to be well accepted and no conservation programme could be successful if there is not enough support given by the public, however good it may be. In short, consideration for the environment could come only from well-informed citizens who are aware of, and fully committed to their rights to a quality health and environment. Nevertheless, before any behaviour can be changed, it is necessary to evaluate the current state of consumer awareness and knowledge. Therefore consumer's attitude, perception towards organic food products, willingness to pay for organic food product and intention to purchase organic food will be the main agenda of this study.

Market Availability of Organic Products

Farmers recognized that there might be a potential for domestic consumption of organic foods, especially fresh vegetables and fruits. Rice, fresh fruits and vegetables are the dominant cultures grown organically in india . There is hardly any organic livestock production because there are no regulations existing yet. Fresh fruits and vegetables, wild herbs and cereals are the main goods at the domestic organic market. IFOAM quantified continuing growth trends for the domestic organic market (Kung Wai, 2004) and Rundgren (2003) mentioned Maharashtra as an example for successful development of a local organic market. Whereas local organizations see this market is shrinking due to Indian's' economic recession .There are three main distribution channels for organic products in jalgaon District -supermarkets, specialized shops and direct marketing . In Jalgaon District most of the supermarket chains offer organic products, but the range of products depends on the location of the market. In general there is only little variety of organic products available, the most common organic products are vegetables and Fruits. Supermarkets offer organic products in the same way as other goods so it's not easy for consumers to make out the organic food. Organic vegetables and fruit are in the same shelf as hygienic products, without any special advertisement. Only Carrefour has a separate shelf for organic and provides information about these products. It is also the only supermarket with its own brand for organic products. The other supermarkets sell organic products with producer brands. Specialized shops focus on organic products, healthy food, or special dietary needs.

As there is only a small range of products -like vegetables, herbs and rice -available. Inorganic quality, conventional goods are also sold. Conventional vegetables, fruit and meat come from hygienic production, bakeries and teas often come from development projects and products which are labeled "GMOfree" can also be found there.

Objective of Study

In this study we have to understand the attitude of consumer regarding their purchasing power of organic food. consumer who never purchase any organic product and those who are in longer time dedicated themselves as an organic food buyers and consumers.

- a. To know about consumer attitude towards organic food product
- b. To investigate the reasons that may influences the intention of buying organic food product

c. To know the factors that influence purchase intention of organic food among consumers.

The ultimate objective is understand consumer perception for buying organic food Products so that organic producers could develop more effective strategic marketing Planning.

Literature Review

- Environmental concerns and buying of environmentally friendly products are the result of the influence of certain values (Grunert and Juhl, 1995). Schwartz and Bilsky (1987 cited in Grunert and Juhl, 1995) outlined five main features of values. “Values are concepts or beliefs about desirable end states or behaviors that transcend specific situations, guide the selection or evaluation of behaviors and events and are ordered by relative importance.” Values serve individualistic And collectivist interests. Individuals use values as criteria for evaluating, selecting and justifying actions so values represent motivations for certain behavior. People within a culture are assumed to share values to a certain extend. So values can be used to describe similarities and differences between cultures and to characterize concrete behaviors (Grunert and Juhl, 1995).
- As early as 1965, consumer’s attitudes towards pesticide use in farms were explored (Bearler and Willits, 1968; Sachs et al., 1987). Methods used to explore these topics have been varied, included mail and phone surveys. According to the research, there are number of reasons that consumer choose to purchase organic food products, as well as some barriers. Reasons of buying could be grouped according to general and commodity-specific concerns (Yiridoe et al. 2005).
- Example of concern includes food safety, human health, environmental impact, whereas commodity attributes included taste, freshness and packaging (Yiridoe et al., 2005). Surveys have identified additional positive attributes that consumer associate with organic food products which include improved taste (Davies, 1995), they are better for environment (Lea and Worsley, 2005), and they are better for wildlife (Goldman and Clancy, 1991).
- Consumers International, a consumer organization, sees organic agriculture providing different benefits for consumers, namely environmental, health related and ethical ones (Pedersen, 2003). Preservation of biodiversity, ground water protection from pesticides, positive influences on rural and social development are examples for environmental benefits (Pedersen, 2003).
- A study from Spain (Gil et al., 2000) indicates that lifestyle and attitude towards environmental issues are important factors explaining the consumption of organic products. Consumers, farmers and retailers have different ideas of quality of products. For consumers and producers aspects such as nutritional value, taste or environmentally sound production reflect good quality, attributes which are not immediately apparent in the shop. Retailers focus more on the appearance of products, which is represented by parameters like size, color, or shape (Lien and Døving, 1996 cited Torjusen et al., 2004).
- According to the 9th Malaysia Plan (2006-2010), chapter 22, the use of chemical and hazardous substances showed an increase, particularly in the agricultural sector. The volume of fertilizers used increased from 2.2 million tones in 2001 to 4.0 million tones in 2004. Through Skim Akreditasi Ladang Malaysia (SLAM) and

Skim Organik Malaysia (SOM), government has introduced better farming practices to reduce the use of chemicals and hazardous substances. Although the government has introduced safer handling measures, penalties for non-compliance with safety labels and promotion of safety features in production and sales by revising the Pesticides Act 1974 in September 2004, not all of the information is made available and well communicated to the consumers. Environmental concern is a strong attitude towards preserving the environment (Crosby, Gill and Taylor 1981). Based on the pioneering research of Dunlap and Van Liere (1978), environmental concern is also defined as a global attitude with indirect effects on behaviour through behavioural intention (Gill, Crosby and Taylor 1981).

• **Reasons to buy organic food products / Perception towards Organic food**

- 1 Beliefs about product safety for use
- 2 Awareness on Govt action and support
- 3 Belief about product friendliness to the environment
- 4 Availability of info on product location
- 5 Availability of product information
6. It is good for health and tasty food.

Research Design

Sample for the Study and the Measurement Instruments

The survey was conducted using personal interview.

Potential respondents were approached while they were shopping in supermarkets and market located in 4 different talukas in jalgaon city.

Sample size was 80 respondents.

Interview conducted in jalgaon, Raver, chalisgaon, jamner talukas of jalgaon district. The questionnaire was designed especially to elicit consumers' buying pattern and their views on organic products. Questionnaire was developed by the researchers based on the consumers' buying behaviour in jalgaon District.

Data analyses

The data obtained from the survey were analyzed to examine possible results that brings to the understanding of consumer knowledge, belief, perceptions and willingness to spend money for buying organic food.

Sr.no	Standardized factor responsible for purchasing organic	Respondent
1	Awareness on government action and support about organic food	13
2	Beliefs about product safety for use	12
3	Belief about product friendliness to the environment	10
4	Perception on organic food is positive	7
5	Availability of information on organic food location	6
6	Availability of information on product information	11
7	Intention to purchase organic food	11

Demographic Analysis of the Respondents

Eighty respondents participated in the survey. Majority were female and their ages ranged between 18 to 50 years and above. The mean of age for the sample was 35.5 years old. Most of the respondent are purchasing organic product are from married group and married with kids.

It is good for health so many respondent who are not suffering from any illness they purchase the organic products.

Table 2 demonstrated the summary of sample demographics

1	Gender Male Female	No.of respondent 25 55
2	Age 10-20 21-30 31-40 41 and above	8 24 22 26
3	Status Married Unmarried Married with kids	30 20 30
4	Suffered from Chronic illness Yes No	30 50
5	Education qualification Ssc/Hsc Diploma Graduate Professional and Masters	10 15 25 30

Table 3**Buying Pattern of Organic Products**

The respondents were asked to indicate their food buying behaviour related to organic foods. Category 1, 2 and 3 and 4 are those who never bought (non users) any of organic products and who bought organic food. Following table shows the category of respondent.

Table 3 showed the summary of the whole category.

	category	Respondent
1	I have not bought organic foods in the past and I am not thinking about buying organic foods now .but in the future I definitely purchase organic food.	10
2	I have not bought organic foods in the past and I am definitely planning to buy organic foods in the future.	22
3	I buy organic foods, but not regularly I am the Occasional buyers.	22
4	I buy organic food because it is good for our health.	26

Conclusion

From the above tables it was indicated that perceptions towards organic food product depict the strongest relationship with buyers' intention in buying organic food product followed by the buyers' belief that consuming organic food product is contributing to preserving the environment. It seems that perception towards organic food and belief that organic food is environmentally friendly are not independent from each other. Consumer's perception towards organic food product was including food safety, environmental impact, human health, taste, nutritional value and visual appeal. Although two factors were described to have a strong significant contribution to intention of buying organic food product, other finding such as belief that organic food is safer and availability of product information (with moderate to significantly low relationship) also support the intention to buy organic food products.

However, other factors (awareness about government support and action and availability on product location) were found to be insignificantly related to the intention to use the products. This may be due to that although people claim to be knowledgeable of the government action in supporting the production of organic food as well as preserving the environment; this cannot be a clear measurement of their willingness to change their conventional consumption pattern. Studies have shown those most significant factors affecting nature is not the official government policy but public awareness or public concern for environment and the readiness to bear the cost of minimizing the adverse impacts of their activities. It can be argued that consumer who are increasingly concerned and realized the essentials of environmental issue are considered as "green consumers"; those consumers who make their buying decision at least partly on the basis of personal environmental criteria. When result indicated that availability of product location has no effect on buying intention of organic food, this may be due to the fact that the supply of organic food can be considered as good where people can identify where to locate organic food product thus the availability does not emerge as an issue when food indicated that there are many other factors that might influence the intention such as importance of price and consumers' health consciousness.

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