



RESEARCH ARTICLE

CONSUMER ATTITUDE TOWARDS ORGANIC FOOD PRODUCT

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ABSTRACT

Availability of organic input and output is critical for the improvement of organic farming in the country. Development of efficient marketing system is the need of the hour for strengthening the organic production in India. This paper made a humble attempt for understanding the consumer attitude towards organic food product in Tirupur District, Tamilnadu. The results concluded that most of the consumer especially in urban people prefer organic food product. The major reason for the purchase of organic food product was health and lack of trust and non-availability was the reason for non-purchase of organic food product. Attitude towards organic food product was positive in case of organic respondents.

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INTRODUCTION

Organic agriculture is produced with an objective to produce healthy and quality foods without using synthetic chemical products. Thus, organic agriculture not only preserves the environment but it also improves public health, bringing significant benefits both to the economy as well as to the social cohesion of rural areas. The interest of consumers and public institutions in organically produced foods has increased, mainly in developed countries, in response to consumers' concerns about food safety, human health and the environment. Export is a mainstay of organic marketing and is expected to reach a volume of USD one billion by 2016. There is also a great deal happening at the organic agriculture production level. The area recently farmed by organic methods is about 1.2 million hectares, plus several hundred thousand hectares in the conversion phase. The states of Bihar and Sikkim are expected to provide USD 20 million and Karnataka as much as USD 50 million. In India, the total acreage under certified organic cultivation is 1.18 million hectares for 2009-10. At the same time, the total number of farmers' registered with certification agencies has also increased to cross the half-million mark. The total value of organic products at farm level is USD 889 million.

Currently, India ranks 33 in terms of total land under organic cultivation and 88 for agricultural land devoted to organic crops compared to total farming area. With the increasing domestic demand for organic food, a number of organic food stores are springing up in the country. India produced around 396,997 MT of certified organic products, including all varieties of food products from basmati rice, pulses, honey, tea, spices, coffee, oilseeds, fruits, processed food, and cereals to herbal medicines and their value-added products. In order to promote organically produced products, a cohesive marketing strategy is needed, which depends on a better and fuller understanding of food consumers and their purchase behavior. To achieve sustainable development, efforts should go beyond cleaner production to sustainable consumption (Narayanaswamy & Stone, 2007). Sustainable consumption only includes buyer behavior for greener products that bring less pollution during production (OECD, 2002). In this study, consumer attitude towards organic food products in Tirupur District was identified and explored.

Objectives of the study

This study attempted to gain knowledge about attitude towards organic food products in the study area.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study was conducted in Tirupur district of Tamil Nadu. The data was collected by using structured interview schedules

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Table 1. Level of attitude towards buying organic products

S. No	Range	Level	Organic (n=120)		Non organic (n=120)	
			No. of respondents	Percentage (%)	No. of respondents	Percentage (%)
1	≤2.54	Low	0	0.00	65	54.20
2	2.55 – 3.53	Medium	78	65.00	55	45.80
3	≥3.54	High	42	35.00	0	0.00
		Total	120	100.00	120	100.00

Source: Calculated from primary data

Table 2. Correlation Analysis

	Gender	Age	Residence	Education	Occupation	Income
Gender	1					
Age	-.049	1				
Residence	.083	-.438	1			
Education	.091	-.274	.205	1		
Occupation	-.424	-.005	.050	.139	1	
Income	.438	.035	.140	.335	-.430	1
Attitude	-.002	-.232**	.232**	.281**	.221**	.090

From the Table 2, the study found that

from 240 respondents, in which 120 were organic and 120 were inorganic respondents. The sampling design employed was convenience sampling and the collected data were analysed using tools like Descriptive Statistics, Multi-dimensional scaling techniques, Correlation analysis, Rank based quotient.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 portrays the level of attitude towards buying organic products. In case of organic respondents, 65 per cent of the consumers had a medium level of interest towards buying organic products and about 35 per cent of the respondents showed highly positive attitude towards the purchase of organic products. However, about 54.20 per cent of the non-organic respondents reported a low level interest in buying organic products and about 45.80 per cent of consumers showed medium level of interest towards organic products. Interestingly, no organic and no non-organic respondents showed low and high level of attitude respectively towards the purchase of organic products.

Level of consumer attitude towards buying organic food products

The level of consumer attitude of sample respondents was analyzed. The mean score and standard deviation of attitude were 3.04 and 0.5 respectively. The minimum and maximum scores of attitude were 3.33 and 4.00 respectively. The level of attitude was classified into low, medium and high level using the rule mean plus or minus standard deviation. The results are given in the Table 1. It could be observed from the Table 1 that 65.00 per cent of organic respondents had medium level of attitude and about 35.00 per cent had high level of attitude. Regarding non-organic respondents 54.20 per cent had low level of attitude and 45.80 per cent had medium level of attitude towards buying organic food products. Hence, it could be concluded that majority of the organic respondents had medium level of attitude when compared to non-organic respondents. Majority of the non-organic respondents had low level of attitude towards organic food products.

- Age of the respondents has significant negative correlation with the attitude

- Residence, education and occupation of the respondents has significant positive correlation with the attitude

It is obvious from Table 2 that, gender and age had a negative correlation with the attitude of the consumers. On the other hand, Education, Occupation and Income had a positive correlation with consumer attitude. Among all the mentioned parameters, Education had a positive correlation on high degree with consumer attitude, which shows that educated consumers were aware of organic food products than the illiterate consumers.

Conclusion

Majority of the respondents were male in case of both organic and non-organic respondents, 25 – 35 years old in case of organic respondents and 35-50 years old in case of non-organic respondents, most of them were belonged to urban area, and were educated. Majority of the organic respondents had business and majority of non-organic respondents were doing agriculture as their main occupation and were high income people. The main reason for buying organic food product was health. Though the organic food product was healthy, some respondents were refused to buy them because of high premium price and lack of trust on the originality of organic food products. The organic respondents had positive attitude towards organic food products whereas non-organic had negative attitude towards organic food products. The organic respondents had medium level of attitude when compared to non-organic respondents. General characteristics such as residence, education and occupation of the respondents were positively influencing the attitude towards organic food product and age was negatively influencing. In other words, consumer belongs to urban area have higher attitude. Likewise when education level of consumer increases, their attitude towards buying organic food product will also increases.

Suggestions

- As the main reason for not buying the organic food product was price, the organic practitioners can be suggested to reduce the price and to increase the productivity in order to generate the positive attitude towards the organic food products among the non-organic buyers of Tirupur district.

- Lack of trust on the originality of the organic food product was another reason for not buying the organic food product in the study area. Hence, the firm producing and selling the organic food products must find the way to create the trust among the consumers in order to improve the purchase intention.
- Majority of the consumers preferred organic fruits and vegetables to buy compared to any other organic products and also the major factor that influenced the purchase of organic food products was the health benefits attached to it. Hence, steps must be taken to disseminate the health benefits of using other organic food products in order to improve the buying behaviour of the consumers.
- Many promotional programmes such as advertising, making posters concerning the benefits of organic food products such as healthy, ecofriendly etc. could be done in order to attract the consumers towards buying organic food products.

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