

Consumer behavior and attitude towards the purchase of organic products: The Restraining Character of Environmental Concern

¹K.Krishnaveni & ²Dr.Ramya Thiyagarajan

¹Research Scholar. Department of Management Studies, Bharath Institute of Higher Education and Research, Selaiyur, Chennai - 73.

²Research Supervisor and Associate Professor, Department of Business Administration, Bharath Institute of Higher Education and Research, Selaiyur, Chennai – 73

To Cite this Article

K.Krishnaveni, Dr.Ramya Thiyagarajan . “Consumer behavior and attitude towards the purchase of organic products: The Restraining Character of Environmental Concern”. *Musik in Bayern*, 89(7), 152–162.

<https://doi.org/10.15463/gfbm-mib-2024-256>

Article Info

Received: 02-04-2024 Revised: 25-04-2024 Accepted: 5-06-2024 Published: 29-07-2024

Abstract

With the increase in the concern towards environmental, consumers are focusing on the green aspect of the products. The issues related to health are rapidly becoming the priorities of consumers in purchasing the products. Moreover, the change in the patterns of food consumptions of consumers appears to be one of the biggest threats for leading healthy life. Increased usage of fertilizers and chemicals ruins the environment and human being's health. As a result of organic agriculture started booming up in many world countries. Factors like Health Consciousness, Environmental Friendly Concerns, Subjective Norms and Willingness to pay appeared are considered to be the major reason behind buying or consuming organic products. The future of organic products depends on demand from consumers and therefore a consumer focussed approach is required to understand organic product market. The market for organic products in India is still in its infancy but has grown steadily over the past several years. Health-related factors and safe use are what are driving the organic market's present rise. The consumer's objectives for purchasing products are changing daily as environmental and health

concerns rise. Additionally, buyers are paying attention to how well the products are made as well as how they affect the environment. These are the primary motivating elements for buying organic items. The purpose of this research study, which focuses on Chennai locals, is to comprehend how consumers perceive organic products. Examining consumer health concerns, consumer quality variables, and the availability of organic products in the objectives.

Keywords: behaviour, consumer attitude, organic products, market

I Introduction

The behaviour and attitude of the consumers have an important influence on purchasing processes, as they allow for the establishment of relationships between producers and consumers. Consumers make purchasing decisions based on products' characteristics, presentation, design, and quality, among other factors. They are not only interested in the product and its packaging, but also in the production process and the raw materials and supplies used. The study of consumer behaviour is complex, since several internal and external variables influence it difficult. Attitude affects the choice of a product and explains behavior based on the conduct and beliefs of the consumers. Attitude, therefore, exerts influence on purchasing decisions, being the most important factor involved in purchasing processes and consuming products.

Consumers opt for a more natural or green choice when they desire for less-harmful products, and there is a preference for healthy foods which results in a good attitude in the consumers. When making the purchase of a food product the consumers consider the origin and the brand, as these are important for decision making, and when viewing a little-known product, their attitude towards it will be one of rejection or doubt. Likewise, the consumer will be willing to pay more for products of known healthy origin, such as organic products; that is, their purchase intentions and positive attitudes increase.

Consumer behaviour regarding the consumption of organic products can be defined by various factors, such as belief in the benefits that they have for health, meaning the nutritional value, certification, taste, quality, and price, in addition to belief in the environmental benefits they can provide; however, these purchase factors are not always enough. Meanwhile, the consumers' attitude toward agricultural products is changing as the need to guarantee food safety arises .

II Consumers Behaviors towards organic foods

Consumer behaviour regarding the consumption of organic products can be defined by various factors, such as belief in the benefits that they have for health, meaning the nutritional value, certification, taste, quality, and price, in addition to belief in the environmental benefits they can provide; however, these purchase factors are not always enough. Meanwhile, the consumers' attitude toward agricultural products is changing as the need to guarantee food safety arises. What is sought is an understanding of the existing dynamics in the production processes and the improvement of technologies in this sector that offer products with added consumer benefits, allowing them to purchase a variety of products. Not knowing the origin and quality of the products could generate mistrust, and consequently a rejection of organic products. For example, the attitude of consumers towards the purchase of foods of animal origin is based on three dimensions: cognitive, affective, and behavioural. It is striking that some cultures have had organic farming practices for several centuries . Ecuador is not the exception in terms of the development of organic agriculture. The first projects were begun in the '90s, and since then, there has been significant growth in the production of organic products. Since then, the production of organic food has experienced in the last ten years, a significant increase in consumption by the population.

The commercialization of organic products in Ecuador has a certification system that responds to the sociocultural and economic reality of the localities. The farmers commercialize their products in the markets and free fairs, since they can have direct communication with the consumers and can therefore establish trust relationships and it allows coordination of purchase and sale between the producers and consumers. This production and commercialization system is based mainly on the access and consumption of healthy products, where the harmful effects of these foods are very low to ensure a healthy diet for the population. Therefore, strengthening and promoting the purchase and consumption of organic products is a challenge, since marketing efforts to highlight their virtues are scarce. In relation to this, the correspondence between organic products' production and legal policies is still incipient, since legally the planting and harvesting processes are protected with greater emphasis on industrialization and not on the more-traditional processes that benefit organic family farming and their markets; In other words,

organic producers need to offer their products in closed markets or with certain limitations, and not all consumers are aware of the existence of these markets and products, and therefore, very little is known about the behaviour and attitude of consumers towards these products.

The study of consumer behavior is complex, as there are various internal and external variables that influence behavior, and it changes according to the life cycle of the product—from its introduction to the market until its disappearance. Understanding the benefit or value of the product as perceived by the consumers is one of the strategies that helps to satisfy the needs of consumers. Understanding the consumers' perception of the quality of the product, which influences the attitude of consumers toward purchase is also important. Consumer behavior contemplates various elements and actions based on preferences, and stable components are considered in the purchase decisions of consumers. Not all consumers perceive all product attributes in the same way, so perception is one of the factors that determines their attitude and behavior.

III Consumer Attitude

The behaviour of the consumer is related to his or her cognitive and affective attitude towards the product. When the attitude of consumers is positive towards a product, they will recommend its consumption; on the contrary, if their attitude is negative, they will refrain from consuming the product. The attitude of the buyers is based on perceptions that will define the product purchase process and has a psychological tendency that affects the choice of an organic product, during which the behavior changes according to the psychological and emotional state of the consumer. A product maybe valued favourably or unfavourably based on the stereotypes held by the consumers. The factors that affect the consumer's attitude are related to emotions, thoughts, personal relationships, and their feelings, among other things. The most prominent factors are emotions, motivation, and feelings of the consumers.

IV Emotions, Motivation, Feelings

Consumers express emotions when they interact with a product which directly influence their purchasing attitude. Emotions modify the cognitive state of people, where feelings experience positive impulses toward the purchase of a product. One way to stimulate consumer purchase is

through positive emotions provoked by a commercial, promotion, or publicity. Meanwhile, motivation is a combination of the actions behind the purchase behaviour. There are approaches that allow it to be determined as the relational vision that focuses on the interactions of organic producers with the market.

When making a purchase, motivation can be divided into categories, such as altruism, which deals with environmental protection, animal welfare, and productive development; and selfishness, which includes nutritional values and negative opinion on organic food. Consumers can be motivated through highly convincing messages linked to food safety that provoke positive thoughts towards the products, which in turn lead them to obtain more and more arguments in favour of the purchase. Likewise, feeling is a sensory component of a cognitive, complex, and lasting structured experience that has affective dispositions and determines the attitude of the consumers who experiences it; that is, they are dispositions of emotional experiences that have implications towards the purchase of the product, and so it can be said that feelings have characteristics similar to emotions. In addition, consumers' feelings about an organic product are associated with perceived threats, risks, and rewards or benefits, and motivations are connected to the presentation and impression of the organic products to the consumer.

V Methodological Aspects

This research utilized the deductive method and contemplates general aspects to reach the specifics. It is of a descriptive–correlational type, because it is a representation of what happens to the behaviour and attitude of the consumer towards organic food products; on the other hand, it is correlational, because it seeks to associate and correlate the variables in addition to identifying their degree of determination. The primary source of data collection was a survey of 195 people, a sample that represents an economically active population of 76,113 individual consumers in and around Chennai. Chennai is considered a city, being the capital of the province of Tamilnadu, and it concentrates an important population in relation to the rural communities. Different associations and producers of organic food products have this city as their main market, and thus they also have market coverage to sell their products.

VI Results

The survey applied to the economically active population of the city of Chennai. The consulted population is made up of 55.3% women and 44.7% men with the age range between 18 and 30 years consist the majority (61.3%). The most prominent educational level was the higher level, with 56.3%, followed by the secondary level, with 27.4%; the social classes with the highest repetition are the middle class and the middle-low class with 63.7% and 19.5%, respectively. When purchasing a particular type of product or service, 82.1% of the population prefers to invest in food and health; when making purchases, 41.6% do not consult with anyone to do so, 28.4% consult with their partner or family, and 23.2% consult with their parents. In terms of the frequency of food purchases, 40.5% do so fortnightly, 35.1% do so weekly, and 13.7% do so two to three times a week.

On the other hand, interest in the consumption of organic products highlights that 47.9% are very interested in acquiring organic food products, and in fact, they are also frequent consumers and consider the purchase of organic foods to be linked to good health; 24.2% indicate that they are infrequent consumers and that they may purchase the product again. The attitude of consumers towards these products is mostly good, with a percentage of 52.4%.

The following cross tables show the interaction between the age variable and the influence of the attitude and behaviour of the consumers when purchasing organic products.

Table 1

Association between age and consumer behaviour and attitude.

Variables Influence the Purchase of Organic Products					
	Behaviour	Attitude	Behaviour and Attitude	Total	
Age	18 to 30 years	37 31.6%	39 33.3%	41 35.0%	117 100%
	31 to 43 years	12 27.3%	10 22.7%	22 50.0%	44 100%
	44 to 56 years	3 16.7%	4 22.2%	11 61.1%	18 100%
	57 to 69 years	1 11.1%	0 0%	8 88.9%	9 100%
	70 years or more	1 50.0%	0 0%	1 50.0%	2 100%
	Total	54 28.4%	53 27.9%	83 43.7%	190 100%

Regarding the influence of consumer behaviour and attitude toward organic products, the survey showed that among the individuals aged between 18 and 30 years old, 31.6% consider that consumer behavior influences the consumer at the time of purchase, 33.3% indicate that attitude influences, and both behavior and attitude according to 35%. It follows that the purchase of organic products depends largely on attitude, followed by behavior, and that attitude is associated with motivation and emotion. Association between age and the variables which influence the purchase of organic products of the consumers was found statistically significant on Chi-squared test ($p = 0.047$). Table 2 shows the relationship between social class and interest in consuming products.

Table 2

Association between social class and interest in consuming organic products.

		Would You Be Interested in Consuming Organic Products?					
		Very Interested	Interested	Neutral	Uninterested	Very Uninterested	Total
Social class	Low	4	3	1	1	0	9
		44.4%	33.3%	11.1%	11.1%	0%	100.0%
	Middle-low	12	10	9	6	0	37
		32.4%	27.0%	24.3%	16.2%	0%	100.0%
	Middle	25	67	21	7	1	121
		20.7%	55.4%	17.4%	5.8%	0.8%	100.0%
	Middle-High	2	8	5	0	1	16
		12.5%	50.0%	31.3%	0%	6.3%	100.0%
	High	3	3	1	0	0	7
		42.9%	42.9%	14.3%	0%	0%	100.0%
Total		46	91	37	14	2	190
		24.2%	47.9%	19.5%	7.4%	1.1%	100%

With regard to social class and interest in buying organic products, the most representative statistic is that, for the middle class, 55.4% are interested, 20.7% are very interested, and 16.2% are uninterested to consume organic products. Majority of the participants showed some degree of interest in consuming these products, due to their quality, price, and that they are linked to health. However, the association between social class and interest in organic product consumption was not found statistically significant on Chi-squared test ($p = 0.10$).

VII Discussion

Understanding consumer behaviours and attitudes is one of the most-mentioned topics today, with the objective of knowing the internal and external factors that influence consumers' purchase decisions. Consumers, thanks to these factors, may have individual or family-level behaviours or attitudes, that is, sometimes decisions are made under the influence of other people or it may simply be the combination of the two parties at the time of purchase. Therefore, the understanding of consumer needs and desires which influence their purchase behaviours is an area in which marketing has concentrated great efforts. In addition, the study of factors that

intervene in consumer behaviour, such as cultural, demographic, psychological, and social factors, is also a substantial focus, with the aim of understanding and anticipating consumer behaviour.

There are many people who believe that purchasing decisions are based on rational analysis, but few know that this is far from reality, as it is the emotions that influence the moment of buying. One study reveals that those advertisements that have emotional content have a greater impact on the consumer, which influences their purchase; but often, organizations are only interested in selling their products without taking into account the emotional aspects of their buyers. There are few who know that it is necessary for there to be emotional content in a brand or mental representation of the product, so that the consumer decides his purchase and becomes a potential consumer. Thus, motivation in consumers is expressed in different ways, being the internal aspect which drives action that arises due to a need that might be satisfied or unsatisfied; that is, it can be positive, reaching expectations, or negative, avoiding fears.

Conclusions

This research reveals that emotions, feelings, and motivation are the factors that are significantly related to the attitude of the consumers toward the purchase of organic food products in the city of Chennai. The literature corroborates this statement, and its contribution to the study of these constructs within the field of consumers' attitudes toward organic products also becomes a focus for future research. In the case of culture and demographic variables, they do not significantly determine consumer behaviour, contrary to the theoretical approach of products and services in another field, different from ecological products. This conclusion offers a position regarding the attitude and behaviour of the consumer towards the purchase of organic products in an urban context, where the consumption of these products is not massive, it is in a growing phase and promoted by associations and organizations that produce and market products, with traditional marketing systems and a phase of promoting them, which could also influence the results obtained.

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