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What Influences Consumers To Buy Organic Food? A Systematic Review

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Abstract

There is a growing demand for organic food by consumers. Understanding demand from a consumer-based approach is useful to understand the changing dynamics in the food industry. Organic food consumption contributes towards the achievement of sustainable development. The study adopted PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-analysis) method. CORE was used for the literature search. The study is to find out the factors, which influence consumer purchase for organic food. The three most important factors which influence consumers to buy organic food are health, better taste and environmental concern.

Keywords: organic, food, preference, consumer, PRISMA

Introduction

The availability and variety of food options are increasing due to globalisation, which is transforming food systems. The main drivers behind the rising interest in alternative forms of agriculture and their consumption are growing health consciousness and knowledge of environmental preservation. The majority of studies on the consumption of organic food are from European nations. Although India has the greatest number of organic growers, it is still a new trend. In India, demand for organic goods is rising in the home market. According to the dictionary, "organic food" refers to a group of foods that are produced in their most natural state without the use of pesticides or chemical fertilisers and are then offered to consumers without the addition of preservatives or artificial food additives. As per the latest report published by International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movement (IFOAM) Germany and FiBL Switzerland– in 2022, the global organic market has been growing at a CAGR of 8.7% during the last six years (2015–2020), which suggest that the demand for organic products has increase over the world.

The prevalent belief that organic food items have more desirable qualities than conventional food products is the foundation for consumer adoption of organic products. As stated by Hustvedt (2006), According to the subjective anticipated utility model of decision-making, a person is driven to select the option (behaviour or item) that provides the most overall utility (value). Consumers of organic foods have distinct values than non-consumers. Vega-Zamora (2020) highlighted that values

play a central element in consumer behaviour. There are various factors that influence consumers' attitudes towards the purchase of organic food; organic food is healthy, prevents and treats certain diseases, is chemical-free, has higher nutritional value, sustains the environment and supports local and small farmers. Apart from the mentioned factors, Sivathanu, (2015) in a study concluded that demographic characteristics of consumers like age, gender, education achievement, and income are important factors in the preference for organic food. The result of the study concluded that gender, income and age are factors which play an important role in the purchase of organic food.

There are many factors which influence consumer acceptance or organic food. The factors that influence consumer purchase of organic food are scattered in many articles. It is therefore hard for the researcher to group it together. This article is an attempt to gather all the factors in one article, so a systematic review is used in this article.

Methods

The PRISMA framework was adopted for the research process and selection of literature for the study. The first phase of the PRISMA statement is the Identification; the literature search was carried out in the CORE database with a combination of topics "Organic food" and "consumer acceptance". From the first phase of the framework, 1418 related articles were identified. The second phase of the framework is the Screening; the search covered the period 2010–2020. The inclusion criteria were as follows; research papers, combination of keywords in the title, keywords section, and abstract of the paper, articles related to consumer-related topics of organic food. The exclusion criteria were as follows; thesis, unknown and slides, papers not written in English. There were 76 papers which was not written in English and therefore, it was excluded, and papers which are not primary research papers. From the second phase of the framework, 841 articles were screened and finally, 91 articles were screened from inclusion and exclusion criteria. The most common reason for the exclusion criteria was that it was irrelevant for the study. The third phase of PRISMA framework is the Eligibility where content analysis is carried out and 91 articles were identified as eligible for the study. The final stage of the framework is the articles to be included in the study. Abstract of the articles were checked deeply for the analysis and purification of the articles to ensure the quality and relevance of academic literature included in the review process. From, this exercise, 8 articles were identified for further analysis and evaluation.

Results and discussion

There is a rising interest among consumers of food that are sustainably grown both in developing and developed countries. Several studies were conducted to find out the various factors which influence consumers' purchasing behaviour and attitude towards organic food. The main motives for purchasing organic food are health and nutritional concerns, superior taste, environmental concerns, food safety and lack of confidence in the conventional food industry, and animal welfare concerns. Especially the first three, health and nutrition, superior taste and environmental concerns seem to be applicable worldwide (Hoffman and wivstad 2014). On the other hand, there are three dimensions that influence consumers to buy organic food; price, time, and eco-label (Sharaf, 2015). Consumers with higher level of education and those with higher income are aware of certain benefits of organic food and willing to pay a premium for additional assurance that organic certification logo provide (Gerrad et.al.). Consumers willing to pay a premium for organic food are mostly environmentally conscious people who think that their behaviour and action will have an impact on the future generation.

Inspite of the growing demand, consumers of organic food are not sufficiently informed about organic production (Sticevic et.al 2011). Consumers who prefer organic open markets for buying organic food were hesitant to trust the credibility of the organic certification logos (Uysal, 2013). There are consumers who prefer to consume organic food but ignorant of the label. The credibility of the logos and the standards and control systems underlying the logos increased as the frequency of purchasing organic food increased. Hoffman and wivstad (2014) studied Swedish consumers' motives and barriers towards purchase of organic food and argued that human behaviour in the context of food purchase remains a frontier for scientific study due to its complexities. On the other hand, the main barriers include high price premiums, lack of availability, scepticism of the source of information, insufficient marketing, satisfaction with current food source, and sensory defects.

Conclusion

The finding of this paper show that human health, environment consciousness, superior taste are some of the factors influencing consumers' preference for organic food. Researchers introduced various factors that influence consumers' purchasing behaviour of organic food. There is a need to create awareness and information on labels, which can add more values to the consumers. There is a need for government intervention to bring out hassle-free organic certification policies. This will greatly benefit both the consumers and the producers. Understanding organic food demand from consumer-based approach is useful in order to understand the changing organic market dynamics.

Competing interests

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