IJMSRR
E- ISSN - 2349-6746
ISSN -2349-6738

THE ANTI ORGANIC FOOD PERCEPTION OF CONSUMERS - AN EMPIRICAL STUDY IN TIRUPUR DISTRICT

Dr. M. S. Ramesh Kumar
Head of the Department of Business Administration with computer Applications, Kovai Kalaimagal College of Arts and Science, Coimbatore.

Abstract
Consumption of Organic food products is gaining a momentum across the world due to its many perceived benefits such as it is free from hazardous chemicals, tasty and healthy. In spite of all these, organic food products are not yet accepted by a majority of consumers and they continue to buy the conventional foods only. This study has made an attempt to assess the level of awareness on organic foods of the sample respondents and identify the major anti-organic food perceptions prevailing among the common consumers which may have to be suitably addressed by the producers and marketers of organic food products for increasing their sales. Major anti-Organic food perceptions identified in the study are: Too expensive, Its Organic production is doubtful, It is not commonly available in the shop, Safety is doubtful, Non availability of more assortment (variety / range), Do not know the brand, Have to travel long distance to buy, Organic food is not of higher quality, No enough choice, Not much Aware of, Don't like the image /packaging and Not tasty. Suggestions made based on the findings of the study would be useful to the development of organic foods market.

Key Words: Organic Food, Conventional Food, Anti-Organic Food Perceptions.

Introduction

Wier and Calverley (2002) stated that the interest of consumers in organic food products has grown tremendously in many industrialized countries during the past ten years. It is observed that the organic food products are also one of the fastest growing areas of the food market in India. Consumer behaviour is the study of how individuals make decisions to spend the available resources on consumption-related items. It includes the study of what they buy, why they buy it, when they buy it, where they buy it, how often they buy it and how often they use it. Organic food products are tastes better than conventional produced foods, concerns about health and nutrition, environmental concerns, concerns over the use of chemicals and pesticides in conventional farming.

Organic Foods

Organic food products are produced without using modern inputs such as synthetic pesticides and chemical fertilizers in an environmentally and socially responsible approach. Popular organic food products include Fresh vegetables, Fresh fruits, Milk and milk products, Cereals (Wheat, Rice, etc.), Bread and bakery products, Pulses. Baby products, Dried fruits and nuts, Beverages, Oil (Edible) and Herbs and Spices. These Organic food products are certified by approved organization. Products self-claimed/non-certified are also available in the market.

Government of India and the state governments are also supporting and promoting production of organic crops, fruits and vegetables etc. through various schemes viz., National Horticulture Mission (NHM), Horticulture Mission for North East and Himalayan States (HMNEH), Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (RKVY), National Project on Management of Soil Health and Fertility (NPMSHF), National Project on Organic Farming (NPOF), Network Project on Organic Farming under Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) and various schemes of Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA).

Objectives of the Study

1. To assess the level of awareness of the respondents on organic food products.
2. To identify the anti-organic food perceptions held by the common consumers.
3. To study the socio economic factors of the respondents.
4. To suggest suitable marketing strategies for the producers and sellers of organic food to overcome the anti-organic food perceptions.

Hypotheses of the Study

1. Consumers have an anti-organic food perception which makes them to hesitate to change to buying of organic foods from the conventional foods
2. The anti-organic food perception of consumers is caused by many socio economic factors of the consumers

Statement of the Problem

Organic foods are known for their chemical free production .Consumers perceive that the organic food products are healthy, tasty and harmless. Governments and non government organizations are promoting organic food production all over the world. However, the organic food products have reached only the so called affluent lifestyle families and families with good educational background and the common consumer is still away from the organic food products. Development of organic food markets needs to understand the buyers who have a hesitation in buying them. This study makes an attempt to identify the dimensions of hesitation in buying organic foods and making suitable suggestions to the organic food sellers.

Research Methodology

Study Area

The study was conducted in Tirupur District of Tamil Nadu.

Sample Size and Sampling Method

A sample 0f 200 consumers were selected at random. The sample size was determined on a rule of thumb. A stratified random sampling method with equal allocation was adopted in the study having the strata as urban and rural areas of the district with 100 respondents from urban and 100 respondents from rural areas.

Data Analysis and Discussions

The sample for the present investigation comprises of 200 randomly selected consumers, on an equal allocation of 100 each for the urban and rural areas. Highest percentage of respondents were in the age group of 30-40 years (37%) followed by 20-30 years (21.5%). Distribution of Respondents by their Age is presented in Table: 1

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents by their Age

Age		Domicile of the Respondents		Total
		Urban	Semi urban	
Up to 20 years	Count	6	7	13
	% of Total	3.00%	3.50%	6.50%
20 - 30 years	Count	27	16	43
	% of Total	13.50%	8.00%	21.50%
30 - 40 years	Count	36	38	74
	% of Total	18.00%	19.00%	37.00%
40 - 50 years	Count	24	24	48
	% of Total	12.00%	12.00%	24.00%
50 - 60 years	Count	5	10	15
	% of Total	2.50%	5.00%	7.50%
Above 60 years	Count	2	5	7
	% of Total	1.00%	2.50%	3.50%
Total	Count	100	100	200
	% of Total	50.00%	50.00%	100.00%

Source: Survey Results computed by the Researcher

The sample was constituted by 59% of males and 41% of females. Proportional representation of males was high from urban areas. Distribution of Respondents by their Gender is presented in Table: 2

Table 2: Distribution of Respondents by their Gender

Gender		Domicile of the Respondents		Total
		Urban	Rural	
Male	Count	62	56	118
	% of Total	31%	28%	59%
Female	Count	38	44	82
	% of Total	19%	22%	41%
Total	Count	100	100	200
	% of Total	50.0%	50.0%	100.0%

Source: Survey Results computed by the Researcher

Analysis of the educational status of the respondents reveals that about 41% of the respondents are graduates and another 22% of the respondents are postgraduates. Distribution of Respondents by their Educational Status is presented in Table:3

Table 3: Distribution of Respondents by their Educational Status

Educational Status		Domicile of the Respondents		Total
		Urban	Rural	
Up to SSLC / Matric	Count	12	26	38
	% of Total	6%	13%	19%
Higher Secondary	Count	19	17	36
	% of Total	9.5%	8.5%	18%
Degree	Count	43	39	82
	% of Total	21.5%	19.5%	41%
Post Graduate and above	Count	26	18	44
	% of Total	13%	9%	22%
Total	Count	100	100	200
	% of Total	50.0%	50.0%	100.0%

Source: Survey Results computed by the Researcher

Analysis of the occupational status of the respondents reveal that about 54% of the respondents are Salary Employed and another 28.5% of the respondents are Self employed/own business. Percentage Distribution of Respondents by their Occupational Status is presented in Table: 4

Table 4: Percentage Distribution of Respondents by their Occupational Status
(Percentages)

Occupational Status	Domicile of the Respondents		Total
	Urban	Rural	
Professional	4	3	7
Salary Employed	28	26	54
Self employed/own business	12.5	16	28.5
Retired	1.5	2	3.5
Housewife	2.5	1.5	4
Student	1.5	1.5	3
Total	50	50	100

Source: Survey Results computed by the Researcher

Analysis of the annual family incomes of the respondents indicate that the highest of percentage of 49 % are in the annual income group of Rs.4 Lakhs – Rs.6 lakhs followed by Rs. 2 lakhs - Rs. 4 lakhs with 25% of respondents. Percentage distribution of respondents by their Annual Family Income is presented in Table: 5.

Table 5: Percentage Distribution of Respondents by their Annual Family Income
(Percentages)

Annual Family Income	Domicile of the Respondents		Total
	Urban	Rural	
Rs.2 Lakhs – Rs.4 lakhs	13.5	11.5	25.0
Rs.4 Lakhs – Rs.6 lakhs	26.0	23.0	49.0
Rs. 6 lakhs - Rs. 8 lakhs	9.0	12.5	21.5
Above Rs. 8 lakhs	1.5	3.0	4.5
Total	50.0	50.0	100.0

Source: Survey Results computed by the Researcher

Awareness on Organic Food Products

Purchase decisions of consumers towards the organic food products would depend on their level of awareness organic foods and their characteristics. All consumers may not have awareness about organic food products. Therefore, response for level of awareness on organic food products have been captured in a five point Likert's scale as Very Low, Low, Moderate, High and very High. These responses have been converted into numerical scores of 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 respectively. To understand the level of awareness as perceived by the respondents, the average score has been computed. Overall average level of respondents was computed as 3.34 out of 5 which indicate that the level of awareness of respondents is 66.8%. More than 80% of the respondents have only less than a moderate level of awareness on organic food products.

IJMSRR
E- ISSN - 2349-6746
ISSN -2349-6738

Table 6: Distribution of Respondents by Their Level of Awareness on Organic Food Products and their Domicile

Level of Awareness	Domicile of the Respondents		Total
	Urban	Rural	
Very Low	6.5	7.5	14.0
Low	8.0	9.5	17.5
Moderate	25.0	24.0	49.0
High	9.0	7.0	16.0
Very High	1.5	2.0	3.5
Total	50.0	50.0	100.0

Source: Survey Results computed by the Researcher

Anti Organic Food Perception of Consumers

Based on a pilot enquiry, about 12 anti organic food perceptions for the hesitation of consumers towards organic food products, viz., Too expensive, Its Organic production is doubtful, Not tasty, No enough choice, Do not know the brand, Don't like the image/packaging, It is not commonly available in the shop, Non availability of more assortment (variety / range) , Safety is doubtful, Organic food is not of higher quality , Have to travel long distance to buy and Not much known about, were identified and included in the survey questionnaire. Data on these reasons were captured on a five point Likert's Scaling as 'Strongly Agree'. 'Agree', 'Neutral', 'Disagree' and 'Strongly Disagree', which have been converted to the corresponding numerical scores of 5,4,3,2 and 1 respectively.

Table 7: Number of Respondents by their Response and Mean Score on the Perceptions

Identified Dimensions	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total	Mean Score
Too expensive	83	64	39	8	6	200	4.05
Its Organic production is doubtful	54	62	69	11	4	200	3.76
It is not commonly available in the shop	49	61	74	11	5	200	3.69
Safety is doubtful	47	54	79	14	6	200	3.61
Non availability of more assortment	44	67	63	18	8	200	3.61
Do not know the brand	42	64	72	13	9	200	3.59
Have to travel long distance to buy	43	49	67	24	17	200	3.39
Organic food is not of higher quality	38	43	84	26	9	200	3.38
No enough choice	37	43	86	24	10	200	3.37
Not much Aware of	27	53	68	37	15	200	3.20
Don't like the image/packaging	24	49	69	39	19	200	3.10
Not tasty	23	51	64	41	21	200	3.07

Analysis reveal that among all the anti organic food perceptions proposed in the questionnaire, 'Too expensive' and 'Its Organic production is doubtful' have emerged as the top most reasons for the hesitation of consumers in buying organic food products. Results of the analysis on the relative positions of the perceptions are presented in Table:7 .

Findings of the Study

1. Highest percentage of respondents were in the age group of 30-40 years (37%) followed by 20-30 years (21.5%).
2. The sample was constituted by 59% of males and 41% of females. Proportional representation of males was high from urban areas.
3. About 41% of the respondents are graduates and another 22% of the respondents are postgraduates.
4. About 54% of the respondents are Salary Employed and another 28.5% of the respondents are Self employed/own business.
5. The highest of percentage of 49% are in the annual income group of Rs.4 Lakhs – Rs.6 lakhs followed by Rs. 2 lakhs - Rs. 4 lakhs with 25% of respondents
6. Overall awareness level of respondents was computed as 3.34 out of 5 which indicate that the level of awareness of respondents is 66.8%.
7. More than 80% of the respondents have only Low level to a moderate level of awareness on organic food products

8. Major anti organic food perceptions identified in the study are: too expensive, its organic production is doubtful, it is not commonly available in the shop, safety is doubtful, non availability of more assortment (variety / range), do not know the brand, have to travel long distance to buy, organic food is not of higher quality , no enough choice, not much aware of , don't like the image /packaging and not tasty
9. 'Too expensive' and 'Its Organic production is doubtful' have emerged as the top most reasons for the hesitation of consumers in buying organic food products

Suggestions

1. Based on the findings of the study the following suggestions are made which may be useful or the producers, seller and policy makers and d the academicians related to the production and marketing of organic food Products.
2. As the level of awareness of the respondents on organic foods is low. Hence the traders of organic food products may take steps through advertisements, seminars, hoardings etc to make the common consumer to be more aware of the benefits of organic foods.
3. Consumers always compare the prices of organic foods with the corresponding conventional food products. Prices of the most of the organic foods are heavily priced than the conventional foods. Traders may adopt suitable logistic methods to reduce the operational costs so as to bring down the cost of organic products they deal with.
4. Many consumers express basic doubts about the genuineness of the organic foods. It is the duty of the traders to create a trust about their products and brands in the minds of consumers. Traders may arrange buyers' visits to their organic farms.
5. Traders have to take steps through effective advertisements to eradicate the anti organic perceptions from the minds of common consumers.

Limitations of the Study

The study is confined to a small geographical area with a small sample of 200 respondents. Only a convenient sampling method is adopted in the study which may cause sizable sampling error. The perceptions expressed by the respondents may change over a period of time. Hence, generalization of the findings of this study have to be done with a caution.

Conclusions

Organic food products are very much liked by the consumers for their attractive features such as safe, healthy and tasty. More and more sales outlets are taking up the trading of organic foods. Government is extending full support towards organic farming. But, the speed at which the organic foods are popularized is not up to the mark. Majority of the consumers are either not aware of the features of organic foods or they are hesitant to buy organic foods due to certain anti organic perceptions. This study has assessed the level of awareness on organic food products and identified major anti-organic perceptions of the general consumers. Important suggestions have also been made for the development of organic food market.

References

1. Chakrabarti, Somnath.(2010) "Factors influencing Organic food purchase in India - Expert survey insights." British Food Journal, Vol 112, issue 8,: 902-915.
2. Mahesh Dr. N. and Dr. R. Ganapathi, (2012),"A Study on Determinants of Consumers' Purchase Behaviour Towards Green Products", International Journal of Management (IJM), Volume 3, Issue 3, pp. 32 - 41,
3. Menon M. K. (2009) Organic Agriculture and Market Potential in India-The World of Organic Agriculture. Statistics and Emerging Trends 2009. Willer, H. and Kilcher, L. (Eds)
4. Muthukumaran, K. (2006), "Organic Agriculture and Food Industry: Trends, Challenges and Opportunities." CAB Calling; College of Agricultural Banking, 13-20.
5. Ramesh, P., Panwar, N., Singh, A., Ramana, S., Yadav, S. K., Shrivastava, R., and Rao, A. S. (2010), 'Status of organic farming in India', Current Science, 98 (9), 1190-1194.
6. Singh, Sukhpal.(2003), "Marketing of Indian Organic Products: Status, Issues, and Prospects." Sristi. Ahmedabad: IIM_A.
7. Tamil Nadu Agricultural University,Coimbatore-website http://agritech.tnau.ac.in/org_farm/orgfarm_introduction.html)
8. Zeinab, S. S., Seyedeh, M. S. (2012). The main factors influencing purchase behavior of organic products in Malaysia. Interdisciplinary Journal of Contemporary Research in Business, 4(1).
9. Zepeda, Lydia, and Jinghan Li. (April 2007), "Characteristics of Organic Food Shoppers." Journal of Agricultural and Applied Economics 39, no. 1 , 17.