Chapter 20

Moderating Role of Demographics on Attitude towards Organic Food Purchase Behavior:
A Study on Indian Consumers

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the current research is to examine moderating role of demographics on attitude towards organic food purchase behavior. Environmental attitude components were classified as actual, verbal, and affect commitment. Data was collected through survey technique in six cities across India. The findings revealed that consumers' attitude towards organic food purchase was influenced by attitude components of Actual and Verbal commitment and moderated by demographic factors of income, gender and age. The findings can be of use to firms marketing organic food brands in India. Environmental attitude factors and demographic factors like income, age, and gender can be used for profiling consumers. With increased growth of organic food market in the country, green marketing and organic food products are upcoming research areas. There is limited research on Indian consumers' attitude towards organic food products. The findings can provide valuable insights to companies marketing these products in the country.

INTRODUCTION

The concept of organic farming is not a novel concept as in the past many regions in India practiced organic farming. However, after independence there was food scarcity in the country. To tackle the food shortage, government invested on chemical fertilizers in order to boost agricultural productivity. In recent years, ancient concept of organic cultivation has again gained momentum due to awareness among consumers about deteriorating effects of pesticide residues on environment and human health

(Chandrashekhar, 2010). Organic food is defined as food item prepared or grown without using harmful pesticides, preservatives and other chemicals. As organic food consumption is becoming popular among health and environment conscious consumers (Technopak, 2012), it was assumed that understanding factors affecting Indian consumers' attitude towards organic food would be useful for companies marketing organic food. In recent years, there has been increased demand for organic food products among metropolitan consumers. The monthly expenditure on organic products was reported to be highest in Mumbai followed by Delhi, Bangalore, and Chennai. Recent press releases suggest that sixty two percent of metropolitan consumers buy organic food. Retailers state that health and environmental concern are major reasons for consumers preferring organic food (Sally, 2013).

Organic vegetable is most popular food product among Indian consumers and accounts for sixty eight percent followed by fruits, pulses, juices, grains and milk (Technopak, 2012). Organic packaged food and beverages are other product items popular with Indian consumers. Most Indian consumers felt that organic food is healthier than conventionally grown food. Scientific and health related factors influenced consumers' attitude towards organic food. Indian consumers' attitude towards organic food items was affected by availability, price, region where it was grown, processing, packaging and total time taken from farm to market (Sally, 2013).

Organic food market is expected to grow at Compound Annual Growth Rate of around nineteen percent during year 2012-2017 (PRWEB, 2013). The global organic food and beverages market is projected to grow at USD 104.5 billion by 2015. India ranks tenth in the world based on total cultivable land under organic certification and area under organic food certification is currently 5.21 million hectare (The Economic Times, 2012). India produced around 1.34 million certified organic products in last year. Organic food items like sugarcane, cotton, basmati rice, pulses, tea, spices, coffee, oil seeds, fruits, and other value added products are being cultivated across different states in the country. The increased production of organic food is driven by increased demand for organic food in domestic market. Province/state of Madhya Pradesh ranked first in organic food cultivation followed by Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh (APEDA, 2013). The other Indian states involved in organic farming are Gujarat, Kerala, Karnataka, Uttaranchal, Sikkim, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, and Himachal Pradesh (Chandrashekar, 2010; The Economic Times, 2012). These reports clearly indicate that the organic food market in India has high untapped potential and thus provides a huge opportunity for researchers as well as practitioners.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Research in western countries on organic products has discussed the influence of attitudes and past environmental buying behavior. Factors like environmental attitude, health concern, lifestyle, and peer influence affect pro-environment behaviour (Bigne´, 1997; Fraj & Martı´nez, 2002; Junaedi, 2007; Fraj & Martı´nez, 2007; Pickett-Baker and Ozaki, 2008; Smith and Paladino, 2010; Akehurst et al. 2012). This research primarily focuses on the moderating role of demographic factors on environmental attitude towards organic food buying behavior among Indian consumers. Given that organic food is a nascent market and likely to grow substantially in the coming years (PRWEB, 2013), it was assumed that understanding consumers' attitude towards organic food would help companies marketing these products to understand consumers better. Researchers in western countries have examined multiple dimensions like socio-demographics, food buying behaviour, and nutritional composition that influence awareness level and purchase of organic foods (Hill & Lynchehaun, 2002; Brugarolas Molla`-Bauza` et

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