Organic Food Purchasing Behaviour in Iran

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Abstract

The goal of this study is to determine the influence of organic knowledge, quality, price consciousness, subjective norms and familiarity on attitude and organic buying behaviour. Moreover, this study applied theory of planned behaviour to search about organic buying behaviour of all users in Iran. According to this issue, total 150 participants by simple random sampling through direct survey questionnaire method has been chosen. Finally, conclusion indicated that whole impacts are positive and significant except the subjective norms influence on organic buying behaviours.

Keywords: Iran, Organic Food, Purchasing Behaviour, Green Environment, Theory of Planned Behaviour, Subjective Norms, Organic Knowledge

1. Introduction

Organic has been defined as the path by which agricultural goods are developed (USDA, 2008). Particular needs persuaded and maintained based on the goods to be defined as organic one. Material and goods got label as organic one are goods that are improved, passed and all of them are in the production situation in line according to the standard rights and got certification by the body of industry (Lyons et al., 2001).Based on Yi (2009) beliefs, organic foods are improved to maintain the food integrity, instead of artificial content, preservations and irradiation.

Study has evaluated that international organic industry is improving at a 10 to 30 percentage (p.a) and it is worthy of 33 billion $ (Rural companies research and improvement firms, 2006). Those organic goods with certification in Iran were reported first in 1999, at the time that an orchard including roses for taking away necessary oil in Kerman was changed to organic. In 2006, another firm in Fars was documented to have, exported medical herbs, organic pomegranate, figs, and dates, to the Europe union; as a result, market of organic has been developed immediately since. Organic agriculture would be figured out in 11 from 31 provinces in Iran. Three global bodies of certification are as active in Iran: BSC OKo- Garantied Germany, Netherlands control union and soil association in United Kingdom. Company of Biosun certifier is a local company. It is coming as the partnership allowance with global certification feature bio inspect in Switzerland (Willer et al., 2012).

In the majority of developing countries, local market for organic goods in Iran is not big. As a matter of fact, domestic requests for organic goods have been developed equal with growth of incomes and users' knowledge regarding food safety elements. Basically, In developing countries, local organic market begins from capital area with little health and outlets shops. Commonly these shops placed in areas of residence which are lived by upper middle class group (Sirieix et al., 2011; Kledal et al., 2009 and 2010). Similar things goes for Iran in a place that organic goods like honey, rice and olive oil are present in outlets in some high end area of resident on north place of Tehran.

Stable market is available without a products supply consistent. Moreover, packaging and quality require to be developed due to the lower cost of distribution and secure a developing users interest (Willer et al. 2012). Organic can be an emerging research area based on belief of Huang 1996. Existence of many European research mentioned the users based in organic buying (Hill & Lychehuan, 2002; Makatouni, 2002; Magnusson et al., 2001; tregear et al., 1994; Sundqvist and Tarkianinen , 2005). This study emphasized on attitudes of users due to organic goods (Magnusson et al., 2001; Tregear et al., 1994) and users motivation for buying organic food (Sundqcist , 2005 and Tarkiainen , 2005; Makatouni, 2002). Besides, a few studies contributed to the market of Iran and even less testing the youth marketplace (Asadi and Akbari, 2008).

According to Lockie et al., (2002) organics future would be more relied on motivation of final users. Furthermore, this research would test users' motivation and their buying behaviours based on organic food inside Iran. This research tries to estimate the impacts of knowledge of organic production, price consciousness, quality, familiarity, and subjective norms on attitude and organic buying behaviours.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Green Purchase Behaviour

Recently, majority of companies have covered green marketing and applied the features of environmental issues as a source of competitive advantages in their businesses. It is all for to maintain market competitive issues and companies' responsibilities for environment and society (Roberts, 1996).

One of the pro-environmental behaviour is Green purchase behaviour (Chan, 2001; Kim and Choi, 2003 and 2005; Kim, 2002; Mostafa, 2007). It is all related to the using and buying goods which have minimal influence on environment (Mainieri et al., 1997). Clearly, companies attempted to act in a sustainable manner but supported by acting so would enable them to obtain competitive advantage. Also, It is contributed to the question about green purchase if there are appropriate green goods in market place (Chan, 1996) as the green market shares activities which is not properly available (Peattie, 2001 ; Shrum et al., 1995).

Number of people who has visited the eco good international fairs in Asia since 2004 to 2009 has improved from 11, 493 to 83 , 469 (organization of Asian productivity, 2009); However, how many of them have switched from purchasing conventional goods to green goods are not known yet .

2.3. Attitude

Attitudes toward behaviour have contributed to the level a person possesses a desirable or non-desirable estimation or behaviour-based appraisal in question (Ajzen , 1991). Based on Ajzen (1999) if the attitude is more desired regarding to behaviour then the tendency of individual to act the considered behaviour become more.
Based on theory of expectancy-value (Fidhbien and ajzen, 1975; Ajzen, 2001; Fishbein and Ajzen, 2008), the entire attitudes derived from different ideas with their estimation. This trend was accepted by Messina and Saba (2003) based on a 974 users of Italy as a sample who attended to keep positive attitudes to eating organic vegetables and fruits. They accepted which organic foods were environmentally friendly, fresh, healthy, nutrition, and tasty compare with conventional foods. Overall beliefs toward these goods with relevant outcomes estimations supported a high relative to the attitudes forecasting. Attitude was found to be a significant element while eating organic foods as an intention factor.

TRA which is the abbreviation of theory of reasoned action (Ajzen and Fishbein , 1975 ; Fishbein and Ajzen, 2005) clarified that attitude is a vital factor of behavioral intention and this is submitted in many researches. Beside, in terms of organic good usage , TRA and TPB assumed to be stable; for instant, the research from Messina and Saba (2003) , Chen (2007), Thogersen (2007a) and Dean et al., (2008) mention a positive and significant association through intention of users to buy organic food , their attitude towards organic food buying , PBC, and subjective norms. Magistris and Gracia (2007) made a sum up of organic food buying which has a significant and positive association with the buying organic food intention and positive attitudes toward organic foods regarding environmental and health issues, and a higher degree of knowledge and income. Many researches figured out the intention to purchase organic foods and behavior are significantly and positively correlated, based on the beliefs of Sundqvist and Tarkiainen (2005), Saba and Messina (2003), and Throgresen (2007 b).
H1: Attitudes have positive and significant influence on organic buying behaviour.

2.2. Knowledge

Knowledge has been define as the information content concerning to someone's memory which impact the method which users translate present selection (Blackwell. et al., 2001).as a result, there is two kinds of knowledge: subjective and objective. Objective knowledge contributed to the knowledge organization which is same as factual knowledge that is kept in individual's memory. It means what a person knows about an object, product or issue. When a subjective knowledge contributed to the evaluation or perception of a person about an object, issue or product (Brucks , 1985; Dodd et al, 2005).

A majority of researches mentioned the lack of knowledge among users in Europe in terms of organic food (Aarset et al., 2006; Peattie, 1990; Kristensen and Grunert , 1992).Midmore et al., (2005) figured out that Europe organic goods knowledge generally is in low rate; however, a significant different exist through European countries. Macfie and Beharrell (1991) and Lynchehaun and Hill (2002) suggested that many users realize the most important features related to organic farming bodies. But still many of them cannot realize organic farming bodies practice and the costs happened.

Many writers postulated the vital elements related to upcoming improvement of knowledge and market of organic food. Demeritt (2002) documented that existence of low knowledge is refereed to be the basic reason for users for not purchasing organic food in United States including 59 percent of participants clarified that they have never bought organic foods for they didn't have any knowledge about them. Fotopoulos and Krystallis (2002) in Greece create a good distinction through unaware users having 18.5 %, aware non consumers including 73.1 %, and aware users contain 8.1 %. Thogersen and Bredahl (2004) mentioned a regular users of organic production of food shown more knowledge complexity bodies for organic food rather that non consumers, they determined this by having interview with German , Danish, British, and Spanish users. Also not entire researches contain a positive relationship through consuming organic food and organic knowledge of users. Gostchi et al (2007) evaluated objective organic knowledge and labels by having question of Austrian high school student regarding behaviour and attitude referred to organic foods but there was no significant linkage between knowledge with attitude and behaviour of consumers.

H2: Organic knowledge has a positive and significant impact on attitudes.
H3: Organic knowledge includes positive and significant impact on organic buying behaviour.

2.4. Subjective Norms

Subjective norms refer to the believing social pressure for engaging in a behavior. It is realized that subjective norm is contributed to the overall available normative ideas regarding the vital expectation of important referents for this individual like friends or family (Ajzen , 2006).Chang (1998) tested the association through attitudes and subjective norms regarding behaviour and examined the ordinary relationship between subjective norms and attitudes. Based on his study this path was significant and positive. Chang (1988) postulated that a relationship might be defined by impact of social environment on a person's attitudes.

Regarding food selection, some researchers like Vermier and Verbeke (2006) mentioned that willingness to comply with others might define powerful intention to buy sustainable dairy goods regardless of having low attitudes. Chen (2007) and Dean et al. (2008) figured out a positive and significant correlation between intention of users to buy organic goods and subjective norms. According to Gotschi et al., (2007) among young Austrian , basic socialization like values and norms that they learned in their house contain a significant impact on the improvement of a positive attitude regarding organic food when secondary socialization at environment of school including less impact on body of attitudes. Tarkianinen and sundqvist (2005) suggested no direct and significant correlation through intention to purchase and subjective norms. On the other hand, they found a significant positive method association for organic food usage through attitudes and subjective norms. Bamberg et al., (2007) by applying structural equation modeling ,figured out that subjective norms cannot have a direct correlation with intention but it can have indirect influence by impacting PBC , attitudes, norms and guilty emotions regarding pro environmental behaviour. It is believed that people pursue norms of sociality not merely for scaring from pressure of social but for they are given information about what the most effective and proper behaviour is (Bamberg et al., 2007).

H4: subjective norms can have a positive and significant impact on attitudes.
H5: subjective norms can have a positive and significant influence of organic purchasing behavior.

2.5. Price Consciousness

Basically, if the price of organic goods is high then it can be the main vital reason avoiding consumers not to go to buy them (Tregear et al., 1994; Magnusson et al., 2001). Particularly, higher price could be for consumers with low income as an obstacle which makes it impossible to them to go for organic foods (Shepherd et al., 1996). On the other hand, it might also be an issue contributed to understanding self-efficacy like it makes purchasing organic food more hard and not that much attractive due to the trade-off through capabilities to purchase organic food and save or waste money on goods and services which suggest individuals' benefits.

Botonaki et al (2006) tested attitudes of users toward vegetables and fruit documented as organic goods and as goods which stand the "system integrated management" labels. Their conclusion postulates that user's interests to pay a premium are impacted by origin, health, and convenience of products. Besides they figured out that interests to pay a premium is impacted by users' confidence in organic produce, source of information, and frequency in vegetables and fruit usage. However, users in this research appear to question the certification's reliability.
H6: The impact of price consciousness on attitudes is positive and significant.

2.6. Quality

Food products' quality outlined as users' requirement and allowance which has been clarified by their attributed of sensory, chemical structure, properties of physical issues, microbiological degree and contaminants of toxicological, labeling, packaging, and shelf life. Based on this model, safety of food includes significance for quality of food. As a result, the users are the main feature to determine a firm's internal explanation of quality .Moreover, explaining quality is bearing with lack of meaning if it faces with failure to highlight requirements of users (Achilleas and Anastasios, 2008).

A majority of users concentrated the vital of quality in food production and related this to the organic food questions. Regarding to a majority of participants choosing to purchase organic foods was an event of selecting quality goods with more taste compared to conventional goods (Killberg & Risvik, 2007).Basically, organic foods related to the high quality degree of goods, local, fresh and seasonal food goods. All of them requested from particularly modern and affluent users (Yiridoe et al., 2005; Wier et al., 2008). Another researches indicated that organic foods understood by a group of users to be of simply a high quality due to organic goods criteria like natural raw materials usage which are highly followed by users (Midmore et al., 2005).
H7: Influence of quality on attitudes is positive and significant.

2.7. Familiarity

Familiarity is defined as the amount of experiences related to the goods the users consumed in the past (Hutchinson and Alba, 1987).

While a person improved familiarity with a good or positions, the possibilities of applying prior attitudes as a part of information processing; for instant, forecasted outcomes related to the future examples of an phenomenon or activity which has been operationalized as emotions, intuitions and feelings (Damasio, 1994) got from accumulated experience based on the beliefs of Fischer et al. (2005).

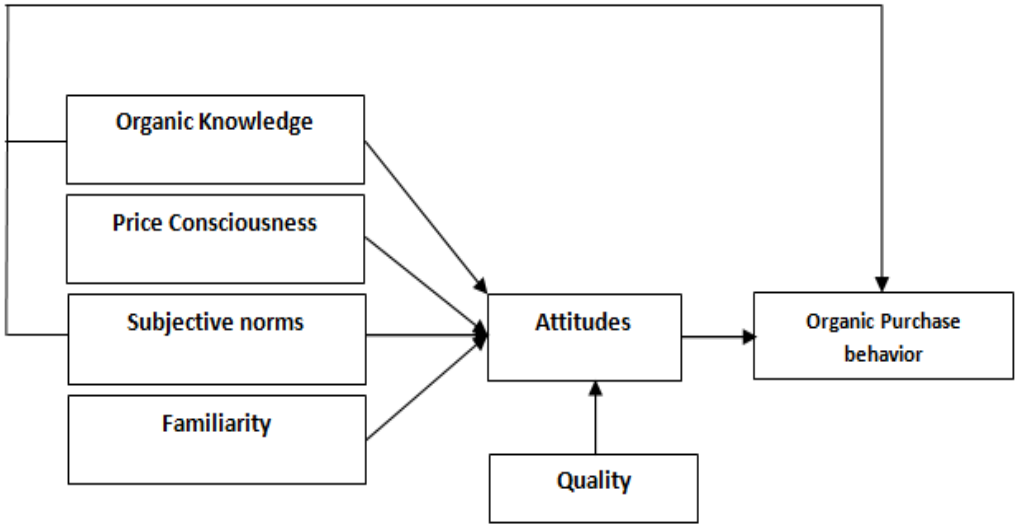
Particularly, familiarity has a significant relation with organic food due to it is a new term and users' past experiences regarding these goods are placed in a low rate. According to Magnusson et al., (2001) familiarity give a new insight to organic food consumption based on although individuals have positive attitudes according to the organic products, why small amount of users buy organic foods.

H8: Impact of familiarity on attitudes is positive and significant.

3. Method and Results

This study applied regression analysis to test defriend hypotheses. For this purpose, 150 respondents are randomly selected among Iranian customers who live in three big cities (Tehran, Isfahan, and Shiraz).

Figure1: Organic purchasing Behaviours by Z.S. SALEKI, S. M. S. SALEKI (2012)



Regarding Nunnally (1978), Cronbach's Alpha sowed that all question have acceptable (or good) internal consistencies since all values were more than 0.7. Moreover, Pearson Correlation test indicated all relationships are significant and positive, and the highest value refers to relationships between Attitudes and Organic Purchas Behaviour (0.811). On the other hand, the lowest correlation is for Subjective norms and Attitudes (0.512).

The first R-square in term of relationships between five independent variables and Attitude equalled 0.724 that indicates 72.4% variation of Attitudes is accounted by these variables. Besides, coefficients table's results showed that all variables have significant and positive effect on Attitudes. In this regard, the highest impact referred to quality with estimated coefficient 0.312, and the lowest impact was 0.128 for Familiarity.

In second regression, R-square was 0.512 that indicates 51.2% variation of Organic Purchasing Behaviour is accounted by Attitudes. Furthermore, the impact of Attitude on Organic Purchasing Behaviour was significant and positive because of p-value equals zero.

In the third regression, R-square was 0.449 that indicates 44.9% variation of Organic Purchasing Behaviour is accounted by Subjective Norms and Knowledge. Furthermore, the impact of Knowledge on Organic Purchasing Behaviour was significant and positive, but the impact of subjective norms was not significant because of p-value greater than 0.05.

As a result, all hypotheses except H5 are supported by the results of this research.

4. Conclusion

4.1. Summary

Nowadays, one of the most important concerns of human is green environment and also healthy food. In this regard, organic food as an important issue concentrated by different scholars. This study attempted to determine the influence of organic knowledge, quality, price consciousness, subjective norms and familiarity on attitude and organic buying behavior. Moreover, this study applied theory of planned behavior to search about organic buying behavior of all users in Iran. According to this issue, total 150 respondents (consumers) by simple random sampling through direct survey questionnaire method has been chosen. The results of regression analysis indicated that whole impacts are positive and significant except the subjective norms influence on organic buying behaviours.

4.2. Future study

Future studies should consider the limitation of this research to improve knowledge of consumers regarding organic food products. Moreover, further studies should take more variables to the account in order to maintain richer views of decision making process by consumers. According to Grunert and Juhl (1995) future research should consider variety of samples in countries to release if the theory covers entire consumer groups.

As a result researchers for further study in Iran context should examine the generalizability of the maintained results in this research.

Furthermore, segmentation of this Industry, Organic food production, should not be neglected by future studies; for instant, vegetables, fruit, meat, dairy etc. According to Padel and Foster (2005) understanding decision making process by consumers is vital for segmentation of organic foods products. In this research all the respondents chose from urban areas; as a result, further studies should take it to the account and choose participants from rural area to figure out the generalizability of this result.

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