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Consumer Knowledge and Perception about Organic Food: a Challenge for Consumer Education on The Benefits of Going Organic.

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Abstract

Organic is the one of the fastest growing agricultural markets due to consumer's increased concern about their own health, the environment, and the reported crises and emergencies worldwide on food safety and environmental issues in recent decades. It has now become an alternative for an increasing number of consumers that are worried about the presence of chemicals residues and the negatives consequences on the environmental caused by chemical intensive production methods. To explore the potential market for customers, it is important to know how consumers relate issues of food quality and food system. The aim of this project is to educate in depth the behavioural process of customers with respect to organic food. It identifies the beliefs and positives as well as negative attitudes on organic food of consumers who buy and do not buy organic food, the impact of those attitudes on food choice for consumers who buy and do not buy organics food, and to model consumer's food choice behaviour with respect to organic food. The result indicates that consumer's interest in organic food is influenced by their belief that organic food is better for health and the environment. This may provide a basis for worldwide education on the benefits of going organic.

Keywords: organic food, consumer knowledge, consumer perception, education, health, environment

Introduction

The market for organic food has increased considerably over the last decade due to consumer's increasing awareness of both health and environmental issues (Soler *et al.*, 2008). This growth in demand is expected to continue in the coming years, even though the situation differs from one country to another in term of type and quantities of production (Vindigni *et al.*, 2002).

The future of organic will, to a large extent, depend on consumer demand. Thus, a consumer-oriented approach to understanding organic agriculture is important not only in its own right, but also in terms of a response to shifting market dynamics (Bonti-Ankomah and Yiridoe, 2006). Nevertheless, to increase the consumption of organic food, many efforts needed to communicate the benefits of organic food and farming to get potential consumers.

Within this framework, this study aims to find out more about consumer knowledge and perception about organic food, to understand the influenced factors in the organic market development. To achieve these main objectives, the study has been broken down into the following secondary objectives:

- Determine the level of awareness about organic food
- Determine the tendency for consumption of organic food
- Determine the factors driving the trend towards consumption of organic food



Materials and Methods

The methodology of this paper is derived by the literature. Data was taken in order to analyze from the report AC Nielsen survey which is held on 2007. Survey has been done in 18 countries such as Norway, US, UK, Denmark, Ireland, and many more so it can be compared about organic perception in many countries.

Results and Discussion

The growth of organic foods in several countries has been dramatic in the past 2 decades although there too many pro and contradictive statements about it. The highest ascend level of organic retail sales is in the Norway about 46 % and followed by Germany with 42%, Us with

26%, Denmark with 21%, UK and Sweden with 19%, Austria with 18%, Finland with 10%, and Italy with 2%.

Organic retail sales

Norway	€60m	+46%
Germany (part)	€459m	+42%
US	€2.6bn	+26%
Denmark	€500m	+21%
UK	€2.1bn	+19%
Sweden (KRAV, part)	€170m	+19%
Austria	€194m	+18%
Finland	€63m	+10%
Italy	€425m	+2%



Figure 1 The organic retail sale in many countries

23,885 respondents, 18 statements
13 categories, 18 countries

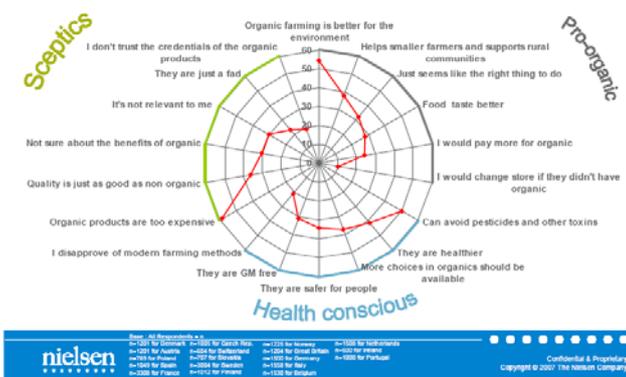


Figure 2 Public opinion about organic food.

There are three types of consumer perception about organic product: pro-organic, health conscious, and skeptic and it shown at the figure 2. The most pro-organic say that organic farming is better for the environment. Since the organic farming can avoid pesticides and other toxins, so it might be the number one reason of the health conscious one. In the other hand, there are skeptic minds which say that organic products are too expensive, so they don't want to spend their money for it.

In figure 3, it showed the survey that had been done in Ireland, Germany, and Netherland to the health conscious people. Most of the people in Germany and Netherland said that organic products can avoid the pesticides and other toxin enter their body that can be harmful, but in Ireland most people said they disapprove of modern farming methods by used a pesticides to protect the plant from the pest. Because they think pesticide residue can be piled in their body.

Besides the other people said organic products are healthier and safer to their body more than non-organic products.

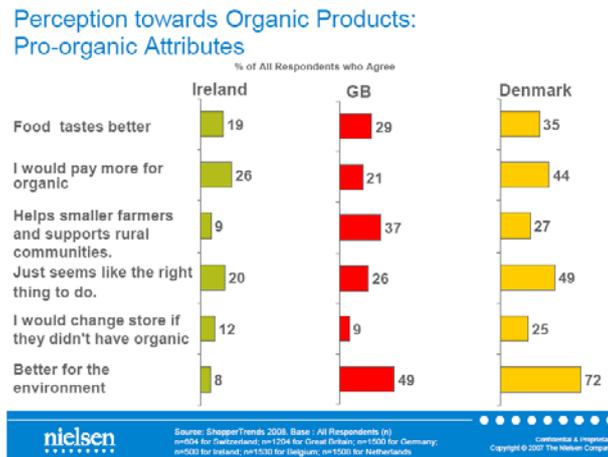


Figure 3 Pro-organic perceptions towards organic products.

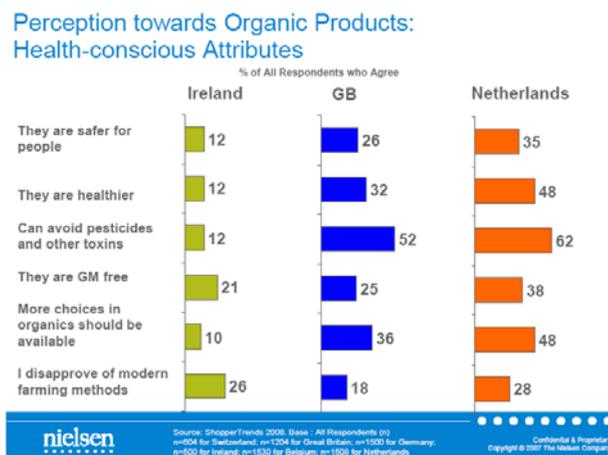


Figure 4 Health-conscious perceptions towards organic products.

Figure 4 shows the perception among the health-conscious people and the results is not too different with the pro-organic people which is in Germany and Netherlands they choose organic product because its avoid pesticides and other toxins and in Ireland they disapprove with modern farming methods that use pesticides so the prefer the organic ones.

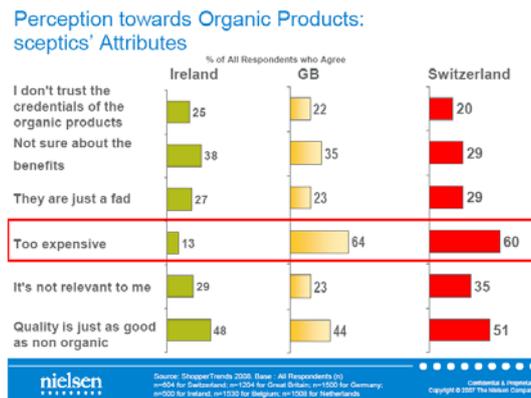


Figure 5 Skeptics perception towards organic products.

The last figure (figure 5) shows the perception among the skeptics people. The main reason why the skeptic's people in Germany and Netherlands don't buy organic products is because of the price. The organic is too expensive for them if they compare with the non-organic price. But in Ireland, they don't choose an organic product because they think the quality is just as good as non-organic so they won't spend more money for the same quality.

Conclusions

The result indicates that consumer's interest in organic food is influenced by their belief that organic food is better for health and the environment. This may provide a basis for worldwide education on the benefits of going organic and for the growing market of organic retail sales.

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