ORIGINAL RESEARCH PAPER

HEALTH ANXIETY LEVEL OF ORGANIC FOOD BUYERS AND ITS IMPACT ON THEIR BUYING BEHAVIOUR

Management

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ABSTRACT

The increasing occurrence of lifestyle disorders and diseases in people working in high stress environments and high stress professions is leading to their shift in food choice to healthier options like organic food. You are what you eat is a very popular saying. Health anxiety is a psychological disorder where a person suffers from the fear that he or she has an illness, although they do not have clinically proven symptoms. There is difference in being health conscious and having health anxiety. With increasing awareness of health disorders and diseases, people are also getting worried about their health. This is more so of people who are more trusting of the media which now propagates fear of everything possible. i paper aims at analyzing the health anxiety levels of organic food consumers versus the conventional food consumers to understand the reason for buying organic food.

INTRODUCTION

Over the last two decades, lifestyle disorders and diseases such as diabetes and high blood pressure have been on the rise. A lot of people already affected and those in the fear of getting affected are changing their food habits to healthier choices such as low fat, low carb alternatives and also organic food. This change in food choice has increased the demand for organic food, resulting change in farming pattern in agricultural countries and also the price of the organic food went up to make up for the supply shortfall.

Health anxiety is a psychological disorder, previously called as Hypochondriasis, now including illness anxiety disorder and somatic symptom disorder.

OBJECTIVES
1. To find the health anxiety level of organic consumers
2. To compare the health anxiety level of organic consumers and conventional food consumers.

RESEARCH METHODS

Study Area

The study was conducted in Mysore city area. Mysuru city is one of the tier II cities in Karnataka, India. Mysore being the cultural capital of India is also a hub of industrial activities and is also called the 2nd capital of Karnataka. This city is one of the most preferred destinations for industries including IT hubs other than Bangalore due to salubrious climate and availability of natural resources (water, etc.). It is a main trading center of silk and sandalwood. It has an area of 6,268 km, and a population of 3,001,127 (2011 census). Mysore has many Yoga centers and Ayurvedic centers. Many foreigners come to Mysore for Yoga & Ayurvedic treatments. Both Yoga and Ayurveda propagate Organic food.

Therefore this city is relevant for our study.

DATABASE & SAMPLING DESIGN

A quantitative survey was conducted with a randomly selected sample comprising of 125 consumers of organic products and 125 consumers of conventional food products from Mysore city, conducted in both generic supermarkets selling organic food products and specialty organic retails outlets. Sampling was done through random stratified purposive sampling method. Consumers who were visited chosen outlets during the survey time, and those who have time to fill in the survey instrument and willing to participate in the survey, formed the sample respondents. The total number of respondents is 250. The reference year for the data collected is 2017-2018

Limitations of the Study
The study is limited to few retail outlets in Mysore City such as Loyal World, Big Bazar, More, Reliance Fresh, Dhaatu, Nature's Nectar, Namaste, Hasiru and Organic Basket. The results are limited to the primary data collected.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
Statistical hypotheses:
H1: There is no significant mean difference in health anxiety score between users and non-users of organic foods.

H2: There is no significant difference between health anxiety levels of users and non-users of organic foods.

The health anxiety level of the organic consumers and the conventional food buyers were collected using the inventory for Health Anxiety with alpha of 0.84 from the International Personality Item Pool, a scientific collaboratory for the development of advanced measures of personality and other individual differences. The inventory contains 7 items.

Table 1 represents the group statistics of the survey.

Table 1: Group Statistics of the Primary Survey

Group Statistics						
	Particulars	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t-value	Sig.
Health Anxiety	Conventional	125	22.5360	5.08404	0.536	0.593
	Organic	125	22.2000	4.82935		

Source: Primary survey 2018

Since P = 0.593 > 0.05, the test was not significant at 5% levels, that is, there was no significant mean difference in health anxiety score between users and non-users of organic foods at 5% levels.

To test H2, chi-square test for independence of attributes was used and the computations made were tabulated in table

Table 2 . Cross Tabulation of Organic and Conventional Food Consumers with Level of Health Anxiety

Crosstab					
			Particulars		Total
			Conventional	Organic	
Health Anxiety level	Below Average	Count	19	23	42
		% within Particulars	15.2%	18.4%	16.8%
	Average	Count	85	87	172
		% within Particulars	68.0%	69.6%	68.8%
	Above Average	Count	21	15	36
		% within Particulars	16.8%	12.0%	14.4%
Total		Count	125	125	250
		% within Particulars	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Source: Primary survey 2018

Chi-Square Tests			
	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	1.404	2	.496
Likelihood Ratio	1.409	2	.494
Linear-by-Linear Association	1.279	1	.258
N of Valid Cases	250		

0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 18.00. Since P = 0.496 > 0.05, the test was not significant at 5% levels, that is, among 125 non-users of organic foods, 19 (15.2%) were at below average level of Health Anxiety, 85 (68.0%) were at average level of Health Anxiety and 21 (16.8%) were at above average level of Health Anxiety and it was found to be statistically not significant at 5% levels. Among 125 users of organic foods, 23 (18.4%) were at below average level of Health Anxiety, 87 (69.6%) were at average level of Health Anxiety and 15 (12.0%) were at above average level of Health Anxiety and it was found to be statistically not significant at 5% levels

Among 42 respondents who scored below average health anxiety level, 19 (45.2%) were from conventional users and 23 (54.8%) were from organic food users. Among 36 respondents who scored above average health anxiety level, 21 (58.3%) were from conventional users and 15 (41.7%) were from organic food users. This implies that, Conventional users were having the tendency to move from average health anxiety level to above average health anxiety level where as the Organic food users were having the tendency to move from average health anxiety level to below average health anxiety level.

Organic food consumers are more anxious about their health than conventional food consumers.

CONCLUSION

From the above results, it is clear that Organic food consumers are more anxious about their health than conventional food consumers.

Therefore, marketing strategies highlighting the health benefits of organic food will be more effective in not only making organic food consumers loyal but also increase the chances of converting non-users to users. The low chemical residue content of organic food needs to be highlighted in the advertising campaigns of organic brands. Awareness campaigns directed at high risk groups of lifestyle disorders and diseases such as people working in high stress environments and high stress professions will help consumers shift food preference to healthier alternatives to help prolong the advent of the disorders and diseases.

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