

Ethical Consumerism: A Sustainable Paradigm for Preferring Organic Products

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Abstract

The present research primarily focuses on investigating ethical consumerism that precisely influences consumers' behavior to purchase ethically grown products and positively impact human health and environmental change. Ethical consumerism stems from the normative viewpoint that supports the natural production of the products and the judicious consumption of such products. In view of this, the present research proceeds in arguing that to some extent consumers who are educated seem to be well aware of the benefits as well as side effects of every product they consume in daily life. Due to this social emphasis they tend to buy the products that are healthy and eco-friendly and as a result they are largely inclined towards organic products. Therefore, the urge towards the gradual increase in the purchase of organic products is its consequential benefits to both health and environment. However, it is observed though organic products promote human health and prevent environmental deterioration yet it faces many challenges and implications. For instance, people fall short in decision making to buy the products that are genuinely organic in nature. The present analysis attempts to bring in the cognizance that the consumption of organic products signifies ethical consumerism. Hence,

ethical consumerism would serve the alternative influencing paradigm in the transition of consumer behavior from conventional to organic products

Keywords: Consumer Behavior, Conventional Products, Environment, Ethical Consumerism, Organic Products

Introduction

The paper commences in discussing ethics and its significance in the decision making of buying behavior of consumers. It shows that ethics are the moral standards that concern the moral behavior of humans. It plays a significant role in the operation of human day to day actions in terms of rightness and wrongness. The analysis proceeds in arguing how ethical standards in consumer behavior facilitate in buying decisions and using natural resources mindfully. The arguments show that ethical consciousness in buying products guides consumers to act with a sense of responsibility towards nature, society, one's own self and so on. Furthermore, it discusses that organic products involve a certain range of values associated that allures consumers to buy and encourages the maximum consumption of organic food. The paper further analyzes that the consumption of organic products covers a broad range of environmental aspects such as protecting human rights, taking initiatives for animal welfare, maintaining social justice and many more like this. This aspect of ethical consumption therefore signifies ethical consumerism. The analysis also discusses how ethical consumerism engages both particular purchasing/non purchasing decisions. while making use of goods, for maintaining the longevity of the items, retaining green environment, disposing or recycling things in an ethical manner.

Significance of Ethics in Consumer Behavior

Ethics is one of the most significant branches of philosophy that primarily deal with intrinsic happiness, freedom, virtue, vice and examine the actions claiming on morality. In other words, ethics is a science of morality that concerns the relation between moral actions and judgments by applying logical and scientific knowledge. Ethics consists of the basic values and principles that guide human daily code of conduct in terms of rightness and wrongness. It refers to those moral standards that impose reasonable obligations to benefit society from multiple aspects and to

refrain from all such actions that bring harm to the society or individual. Ethics when applied to consumer behavior, normatively refers to a code of conduct in specific buying conditions that have to be executed by all persons with rational and logical mindfulness. Moreover, ethics in consumers' behavior can be categorized both as social ethics and environmental ethics. Social ethics comprise the responsibility of the consumers towards society and environmental ethics consist of the moral responsibility of the consumer towards nature. This is to say that when a consumer makes a purchase of fair trade products or performs a charitable action it is regarded as social ethics and the purchase of products that are produced with environmental concerns like organic one falls in the category of environmental ethics. In this way, consumers' behavior engages both social-ethics and environmental ethics while making ethical purchases.

In relation to the above discussion, it is observed that today consumers from diverse classes confront a lot of difficulty in making choices of the available options throughout their lives. For instance, individuals face challenges in choosing because of competing lifestyles, availability of alternative products, and a wide range of food items and so on. Apparently, one of the reasons for making certain choices is the voluntary desire to act in an ethical manner. The advocacy of philanthropic views, sustainable environment, social concerns and the like lead to ethical conscious behavior. There may be some other activities that can be counted as ethical behavior for example, helping the needy, doing charitable activities etc. However, buying products with ethical and social cautiousness also contributes to the ethical behavior. Furthermore, if a consumer buys products with a sense of responsibility towards nature, society, one's own concern or other ethical issues directly engages the ethical consideration in literature.

In recent years the preference for organic products has been acknowledged mainly due to its natural process of cultivation in which food crops are raised that are free from chemical fertilizers and pesticides. Thus, food products that are not produced chemically or artificially are ascertained to be healthier than the conventional food. In other words, the following constituents are absent in organic products such as antibiotics, synthetic color and hormones, genetic engineering, sewage slush, irradiation, artificial ingredients or preservatives. The Organic Trade Association usually promotes organic products by explicit explanation of its features and values

associated with that constitute organic products. It generally involves a typical range of values that attribute to the maximum consumption of organic food. Some of the significant values are as follows:

- a) Altruism:-Relationship dynamics
- b) Universalism:-Protection human and nature
- c) Ecology:-Balance with the universe
- d) Spirituality:- Intrinsic peace and relation with nature
- e) Benevolence:- Welfare of the near and dear ones
- f) Self Direction:-Independent and thinking action taking skills

Because of these values associated with organic products marketers initialize to endorse the products for maintaining health content that is distinctively varied from the advanced efforts related to such food that involves pleasure of consuming food rather than satisfying hunger. (Bublitz, Hansen, Peracchio, Tussler, 2019). Another important value related to the consumption of organic products is the conservation of natural resources therefore consuming organic products is an ethical consumption and this consumption (Strong, 1997) and this way of ethical consumption could directly lead to sustainability (Huang and Rust, 2011). Henceforth, ethical consumption covers a broad range of environmental aspects such as protecting human rights, taking initiatives for animal welfare, maintaining social justice and so on. Because of the certain advantages over conventional food and the growing ethical consumption, the popularity of organic products is largely promoted and supported by the diverse consumers (Essoussi and Zahaf, 2008). It is therefore argued that the organic product is natural and environmentally friendly that substantially involves the notion of ethical consumption. This view of ethical consumption thus engages a quite complex and wide range of phenomena in the context of ethical consumerism.

Ethical Consumerism: A Sustainable Paradigm for Preferring Organic Products

Ethical consumerism customarily is elucidated as a specific way of decision making in purchase that is greatly driven by ethical reasons. It is a “conscious endeavor of the consumer to make their choices on the basis of their values or ethical principles” (Simányi, 2014). Ethical consumers are discerned and segregated by his/her “purchasing and using products and resources according not only to the personal pleasures and values they provide but also to ideas of what is right and good, versus wrong and bad, in a moral sense” (Syse, Martin, 2015). The fundamental idea of such a viewpoint is that the habitual consumption of products can be immoral or at best amoral. Furthermore it is argued that ethical consumerism certainly refers to a purchase behavior in which people sometimes boycott a particular product, company or brand because of its negative review in the newspaper or some other social media. They may purchase a fair trade product for instance coffee or eco-labeled washing powder because they are primarily concerned with environmental issues. Such a form of buying comes under the category of ethical buying or ethical consumption of the products. Moreover, people show reluctance to buy products that are too expensive to purchase or in the case of food products if it tastes bad. Hence, ethical consumers not only acknowledge the price or the quality standard of the product but they also engage some useful ethical criteria in the decision making process. Pertaining to this, it seems that ethical consumerism attributes to some significant reasons or intentions related to social, personal or environmental reasons to choose one product over the other. However, the most common feature they maintain is that they are very much conscious of not only for themselves but also for the outer world around them while making purchasing decisions. The purchase of organic products is thus the best example of showing that motivation plays an important role in recognizing and declaring consumers an ethical consumer. Moreover, people are inclined towards the purchase of organic products because they fear consuming the products which are produced with concentrated pesticides which could directly harm their health. They also choose organic products because they certainly have a deep concern for the effects of the excessive use of insecticides and pesticides on the wildlife, the water bodies and the environment where the products are being farmed. In this sense, ethical consumption is a wide range of ethical actions that encompasses purchasing ethically raised products or boycotting the products in order to incorporate the environmental purchasing policies. In a broader sense, ethical consumerism

engages both particular purchasing/non purchasing decisions, as well as particular ways of making use of goods, for instance to maintain the longevity of the items, to retain green environment by applying various ethical techniques of disposing things such as recycling and discerning different range of managing waste. Due to this changed outlook, it is argued that the preference for organic food is in continuous demand at present time. The change in the attitude of contemporary consumers reasonably happened because of the fact that organic food products involve a number of criteria such as:

- i) Organic farming involves chemical free process of cultivation
- ii) It contains high food quality
- iii) It maintains freshness in its appearance
- iv) Products are eco friendly in nature
- v) It prevents environmental deterioration
- vi) It comprises human health promoting elements
- vii) It prevents life thwarting diseases
- viii) It fulfills the expectations of modern consumers
- xi) It contains value in its consumption
- x) It promotes fair trade products
- xi) It maintains maximum advantage over conventional food
- xii) It promotes a wider scope of marketing in healthcare industry

On the basis of the above argument it is therefore argued that all these factors would further facilitate in understanding the genuine trends, quality contents, impact on environment and inclination of contemporary consumers. All such significant characteristics of organic food eventually made contemporary consumers develop an affirmative outlook of organic food.

Conclusion: The research attempts to address the significance of ethics in understanding consumer behavior and in the consumption of organic products. In doing so, the extant research has shown that there are a number of positive factors responsible for the preference of organic products in the attitude of consumers' buying behavior. A general overview and common belief facilitate the understanding of the nature and standing of organic products in the outlook of consumers. The study has shown that organic food products maintain chemical free production, are eco-friendly in nature, high food quality, health promoting elements that promote human health and so on. The present research substantially ascertained that ethical values in the consumption of organic products are one of the major drivers in the demand and preference for organic products. The study also discussed that ethical consumerism can be a driving force in the healthcare marketing industry and the availability of organic products in all the segments of marginalized society. Thus, it is concluded that the common belief led to the preference of organic food products weaving together health consciousness, environmental concerns, and ethical values associated with it, ethical consumption and so on would lead to successful marketing practices and facilitate business in promoting healthy society and environment.

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