



Consumer Behaviour towards Organic Food Products in the Capital of Valencia Community

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Abstract

All over the world, there are increasing concerns about the environmental protection and sustainable rural development. As well, there is a significant increasing demand for agricultural products in general, the matter which is environmentally friendly and for organic produce in particular; since organic produce is perceived to be less damaging to the environment and to be healthier than conventional one. Therefore, there is a noticeable increase in the organic cultivated land area at the universal level as well as at the European level.

In Europe, Spain occupies the first position concerning the land area of organic production. Despite, annual per capita organic consumption in Spain is considerably low and comes below the average of annual per capita organic consumption in the European Union; meaning that there is a clear gap between organic land area and organic consumption in Spain.

The present research aims at studying the behaviour of food consumers in the capital of Valencia Community towards organic food products in attempt to identify the drivers to the consumption of organic food products in addition to the barriers to not to consume them. Hence, this can help market actors and policy makers to fill in this gap and increase the demand for organic food products.

Target population of the study was included in food consumers in the capital of Valencia Community from both genders and with age of 18 years or greater. A stratified random proportional sampling method based on districts of the city was used to select the sample while a survey method was used to collect data from respondents using a closed questions questionnaire.

The findings of the study indicated that respondents have a medium level of general knowledge about organic food while they have a low level of organic labeling knowledge. Moreover, environmental protection, health, and quality were found to be the main motives towards organic food products. On the contrary, high prices of organic foods, unavailability, and lack of promotion were the main barriers declared.

As well, fresh vegetables, citrus, and fruits are the most frequent organic food categories consumed while organic shops, direct from the producer, and supermarkets are the main distribution channels where consumers purchase organic food products.

The study differentiated the Valencian consumers to four different segments regarding their lifestyle habits. Only two segments have shown clear attachment to some specific lifestyle patterns. These two segments represent 51% of the sample and they were named as; 'oriented to vegetarianism and diet segment' and 'concerned about health and environment segment'. On the other hand, the other two segments didn't show clear importance or attachment to any of the four lifestyle patterns.

Keywords: organic food products, consumer behaviour, organic knowledge, lifestyle habits, market segmentation, Valencia Community.