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FACTORS INFLUENCING CONSUMPTION OF ORGANIC FOOD IN ROMANIA

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Abstract:
Food consumption patterns are rapidly changing nowadays as a result of environmental issues, concern about the nutritional value of food and health issues. Issues such as quality and safety in food attract consumer interest in organic food that is free from pesticides and chemical residues (Childs and Polyzees, 1997; Zotos et al., 1999; Baltas, 2001; Fotopoulos and Krystallis, 2002).

The purpose of this study is to gain knowledge about the demographic characteristics of respondents and about factors that influence purchase decision of organic food consumers in Romania. The research method used was online survey. A structured questionnaire was used which employed with true-false questions, multiple-choice questions and Likert scale questions. A convenience sample was used for this research.

Key words: organic food, organic consumer, demographics profile, factors, purchase behaviour

JEL classification: D12, M30

INTRODUCTION

A review of the literature on organic food consumption shows that most authors have focused specifically on the description of organic food consumers, have examined consumer perception, factors that facilitated or hindered consumption, consumer attitudes and motivation for buying or not buying such products.

Various researchers aimed to distinguish organic consumers by looking at the demographics characteristics like age, sex, income, presence of children and education. Classifications can be diverse depending on the researchers. Most studies use terms of regular and occasional buyers (Davies et al., 1995; Zanoli and Naspetti 2002) while other uses terms; unaware consumers, unaware non-buyers, buyers of organic food.

The purpose of this study is to gain knowledge about the demographic characteristics of respondents and about factors that influence consumers purchase decision in Romania.

LITERATURE REVIEW

ATTITUDE
Consumer behavior towards organic food results from a series of attitudes which are linked by a complex set of ideas, motivations and experiences. Consumer attitudes are between pleasant and unpleasant, positive or negative orientation to organic food. Several studies have concluded that the reasons why consumers buy organic food are: organic food is safer, healthier, have better quality, they taste better, have higher nutritional value and are more environmentally friendly. The high price, low income, low availability, poor appearance and design packages are considered barriers against consumption of organic food (Wier and Calverley, 2002; Zanoli et al., 2002; Radman, 2005; Robles et al., 2005; Padel and Foster, 2005; Zakowska, 2007).

CONCERN FOR HEALTH
Concern for health is considered subjective intention or motivation of an individual to improve their health. Previous studies have shown that the most important reason to purchase or consume organic food seems to be concern for health (Tregear et al., 1994; Huang, 1996;
food in Romania. Further research should extend this study and determine other factors that influence consumers’ purchase decision.

It is expected that organic food production in Romania and worldwide will increase. It is therefore necessary to conduct further research to generate insights into understanding organic food consumer and marketing system in which consumer must make purchasing decisions.

Future research will be useful in helping consumers, retailers, and producers to understand what organic means in the public sphere. Research can also inform the industry and policy makers on what marketing strategies will be useful in educating and informing the public.

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