

A Study on the Influence of Consumer Satisfaction and Loyalty towards the Economic Success of Organic Food Retailing

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Abstract: Every firm's overall success as well as its long term competitiveness is often influenced by the extent of satisfaction and loyalty possessed by the consumers towards the firm's products and services. From the perspective of organic retail stores, the term consumer satisfaction refers to bridging the needs and preferences of the consumer with the firm's products and services or by transforming the responses of the consumers from being 'just satisfied' into 'over and above their expectations'. Current research intends to explore factors influencing Kerala consumer's satisfaction and loyalty while purchasing organic food products based on data collected from 200 (100 regular and 100 irregular) respondents through structured questionnaire. Analysis techniques such as regression analysis, factor analysis and correlation analysis has been applied to figure out how firm's economic success is subjective to the extend satisfaction and loyalty possessed by the consumers within the target market. Research findings supports the formulated hypothesis and confirms that consumer's satisfaction and loyalty has been identified as the key influencer on firm's economic success. Product quality and service provided by the organic stores acts as the major determinants of consumer satisfaction. Moreover consumer loyalty leads to recommendation of organic retail stores to other consumers.

Index Terms: Organic Consumer, Retail Marketing, Business Profitability

1. INTRODUCTION

Every business entity tends to attain success when the services offered by the firm is worth to meet consumer's preference. On the other hand, a low satisfaction scores can make the service providers vulnerable towards the attacks from the competitors who are primed in delivering superior consumer value. Among retail stores, consumer satisfaction has become a crucial point of differentiation wherein the consumers make weekly, quarterly or monthly visit, spending more on these trips than other times.

India's organic market is under huge contradiction. On one hand, the market is emerging as a major organic global market player, while on the other hand the domestic market for organic products is still at its infant stage. Opportune availability of organic products is one of the most important challenge faced by the health conscious consumers in our country. As per the

survey's conducted, most of the buyer depends on branded retail shops such as Nature's Basket, Vasudha organic, Aroma Fresh to obtain organically grown fruits, vegetables, grains, pulses etc. But however such wholly organic food retailing stores are found only in metropolitan cities. The rest of the population residing in the non- metropolitan cities rely on the farmer's markets where one must rely on the word of the seller. This kind of competition possessed a great threat to the traditional organic retailers. On the whole, the organic market segment is growing at a high phase with improved competition resulting in pressure for small retailers due to their cost hindrances. Premium price paid for organic products are still at its increased rate which opens up prospects for retailers to attain market shares by adopting low price strategies. In such a condition, satisfaction attained by targeted consumers is an indispensable condition to prevent their switching behaviour.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This section discusses about the previous empirical researches based on consumer satisfaction and loyalty. According to Rosenberg & Czepiel (2017), "Modern day business emphasize the need for consumer satisfaction and loyalty for two main reasons. Firstly, consumers are considered to be scarce resource and it is quite easy to obtain from an old consumer than from a new one. Secondly, the extent of loyalty and satisfaction showcased by the consumer positively affects the productivity returns of the company". Gomez et al. (2014) stated that, "based on the survey which evaluates the link between store attributes, consumer satisfaction and sales performance with data from 200 organic shops, the three main factor which influences consumer satisfaction are consumer service, quality, availability of products and value for consumer's money". As per Jahn et al (2015), "the selling of organic products seems to be challenging due to its credence quality of various attributes of organic products. Hence personal characteristics and price turns to be more relevant while shopping atmosphere seems to be comparatively less relevant factor which decides the purchase pattern for organic products".

Consumer Satisfaction and Consumer Loyalty – An Overview

As per Oliver (2016), the term consumer satisfaction refers to a "strategy on how to make each consumer satisfied for a long term basis is therefore, a very crucial element. Overall the theory of consumer satisfaction is a decisive component of a business strategy as well as on consumer retention and product repurchase. A standard consumer tends to seek value in the total service provided right from the internal collaborations within the department, product documentation and the final delivery of the product". MacDougall (2010), opinions that "From the perspective of productivity and profitability, those activities which adds value to the consumers should be endorsed. Thereby, the firms get to know their consumer much better than before. This is the way how consumer oriented product or service can be developed".

According to Griffin (2018), "Consumer Loyalty building requires the company to focus the value of its product and services and to show that it is interested to fulfil the desire or build the relationship with consumer". As per McDonald, Keen (2016), "A relationship with a consumer is equally important and this requires that company work in a broader context that extends beyond itself, as no company can be world class at everything". Gremler, D. & Brown, S. (2000), stated that "the perception of consumer loyalty into three different groups which include behaviour loyalty, intentional loyalty, and emotional loyalty. Behaviour loyalty refers to the repeated buying behaviour possessed by the consumer while intentional loyalty is the possible buying intentions. Emotional loyalty is achieved when a consumer feels that a

particular brand resembles with his value, ideas, and passion”.

In accordance with Coyne, K. (2016), “there are two critical thresholds affecting the link between consumer satisfaction and consumer loyalty. When satisfaction reaches a certain point, loyalty increases dramatically, and at the same time when satisfaction declines, loyalty drops off equally. The element of consumer satisfaction and loyalty should be integrated to achieve the long-term goal of a business as consumer’s form the major link for the success of any business”. As per Arantola, H. (2012), “The concept of consumer satisfaction refers to the attitude of the consumer while loyalty can be described as how they behave in the target market. Satisfaction does not automatically lead to loyalty for the firm’s product, instead it is a step by step process. It includes different phases through which a consumer goes such as awareness, exploration, expansion, commitment, and dissolution”. Heskett et al. (2011) identified “unhappy consumers are more likely to speak out against a poorly delivered service at every opportunity. In some instances, they even can discourage other consumers from trying out the firm’s service or products. Thus, satisfaction of consumer is one of the main driver for loyalty”. Tao (2014), based on his loyalty model opinions that “factors forming consumer loyalty refers to considering consumer’s needs and wants. The company must focus on price, promotion, service and products in order to gain consumer loyalty. A comfortable environment has to be created between the consumer and the firm. Investments made to loyal consumers brings advantages to the business in the form of growing effectiveness and economic success”.

3. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

As per the reports from IFOAM (The International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements) and FiBL (Research Institute of Organic Agriculture), India is ranked as the first largest exporter for organic produce in the world market, while the country’s domestic consumption is still at its infant stage. The issue arise in which even though organic products are considered to be beneficial to the human body, why there are still less purchasers for organic products within the domestic market when compared to other countries like United States or other European countries? Why would this happen? Reports from World Health Organization (WHO), states that around 11% of the food sold in India are adulterated. Heart attacks, diabetes, hypertension, anxiety and even depression are found to be correlated with low quality and even poisonous food consumed by millions of people every day. Kerala Food Safety Authority has identified thirteen vegetables, including curry leaves, chilies, tomatoes, cauliflowers which we use on a day to day basis contained extremely high levels of pesticide residue. To sum up, in Kerala most of the consumers have an interest or preference towards organic produce, but when it comes to actual purchase or actual consumption, there are certain factors which refrains them from purchasing the product.

4. OBJECTIVES

In this context, the following research objectives have been proposed:

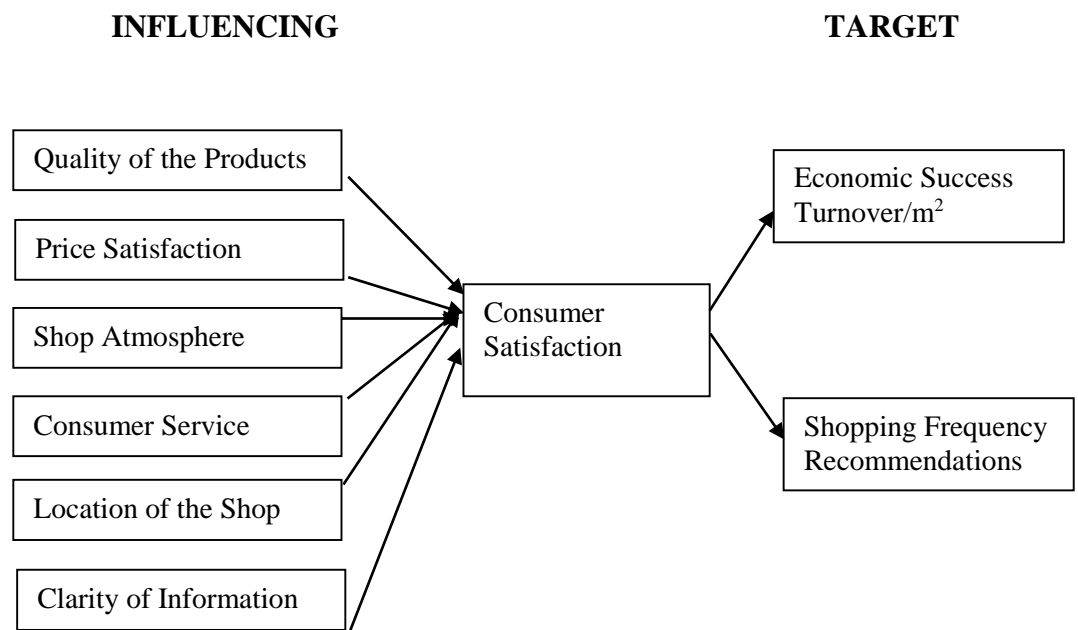
- (i) To investigate the relationship between consumer satisfaction, consumer loyalty and its effect over economic success of an enterprise
- (ii) To develop a conceptual framework to ascertain the elements inducing consumer satisfaction, loyalty and profitability of the business.
- (iii) To examine the link between consumer satisfaction, overall business performance and store loyalty on the basis of individual store data and general survey
- (iv) To ascertain the possibilities of small retailers to survive and prosper in a dynamic business

environment

5. CONCEPTUAL MODEL

The proposed model (Figure.1) recommends that overall consumer satisfaction and loyalty impacts the total sales performance. The concept of annual sales per square meters has been used as the performance indicator as ratio is easy to compare. On the other hand, if profit has been used as the performance indicator, it necessitates to deal with different accounting systems and the comparisons would not have been much reliable. Apart from this, not all retailers taken for the study has reported their profits making level since they considered it as a confidential data. The five major components such as quality of products, price of the product, shop atmosphere, consumer service, location of the store and finally clarity of information obtained forms the major determinants for overall evaluation. The economic benefit earned by the retailers are measured in terms of consumer satisfaction and annual turnover per square meter. Additionally, the influence of consumer satisfaction and loyalty over shopping frequency along with recommendations made to other shoppers is also investigated.

Figure1: Factors Influencing Consumer Satisfaction, Loyalty and Economic Success for organic products:



(Figure.1)

5.1 Description regarding variables used in the Model

According to Chartered Institute of marketing, “All the elements of marketing mix are closely associated with each other in such a way that decision regarding pricing, product, distribution and promotions are interlinked”. As per the research results, a product’s market share could be increased by following three basic strategies. First by motivating the existing consumers to go for organic regularly. Secondly through the strategy of succeeding the traditional and dietary

consumers and thirdly, young consumers could be convinced by conveying the benefits of having organic products.

i. Quality of the Product

Thompson (2013), indicated “the physical appearance of an organic product is directly related its skin-deep quality. Consumers are not dotting towards its outer appearance but focuses on the quality of the product. Higher the product quality, greater will be the consumer’s preference to purchase them which intern affects their level of satisfaction”. Heskett et al. (2011) added that “consumers expects organic products to have higher nutritional value and taste when compared with the normal substitutes”.

ii. Price Satisfaction

Schroeder, H. (2002) suggested that “in today’s context, the generally accepted phenomenon is that the consumers has to afford more for organic food when compared with non-organic food and simultaneously the intensity of hike in price varies”. Also there will be a chance for disparity in setting the price with the source of different costs followed by decisions in the other Ps. “The Willingness to pay by the consumer is affected by the following reason: Quality of the product, trust in certification, health consciousness and the name of the brand”, Krystallis and Chrysosoidis, (2015).

iii. Shop Atmosphere

Booms and Bitner, (2008) advocates that “the stores which sells an organic product, should emphasis on the presentation of the product to the consumer. It must be welcoming, easy to find, must be fancier than any other places if the product is been sold from the pricy side. It is stated that satisfied consumers are the best source of advertisement for the product and brand. Thus right from the product presentation, the ambience of the store everything plays a vital role in converting the irregular consumers into loyal consumers.

iv. Location of the shop

Shop Location represents the channels of distribution that the organization operates to transport their physical products or services to the ultimate consumer. Place has emerged as a highly significant aspect for organic products. Distribution channel designer must clearly understand the service output levels expected by target consumers i.e. what, how, why, where, and when consumer’s purchase, his waiting time for the purchase, the convenience that facilities the consumer when his purchase is completed, product variety for the choice and finally the additional services associated with the product.

v. Consumer Service

The behaviours of people who deliver service are crucial for consumer satisfaction. Hence the service providers in organic shops should be very conscious since some may be less knowledgeable about different brands and benefits obtained from organic food products. Anyone whocomes and get in touch with the consumers will create an impression which can have deep effects on consumer satisfaction which could be either positive or negative. “Business reputation lies in people’s hand. Therefore they must be properly trained and motivated well in order to obtain the right attitude”, Chartered Institute of Marketing, (2019).

vi. Clarity of information

According to Suzana et al, (2014), “Multiple channels are been used to communicate within different parties including distributors and consumers which could be used as a means of promotion. In general the promotional message should reflect clearly what to say and how to express everything in a simple manner. Few measures to promote organic marketing are i) making clear differences between organic and conventional products and outlining symbolic meaning ii) clear statements about positive consequences of Organic food consumption iii) easy

and accessible information about organic products iv) communicating people that it is the way of living”.

6. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

6.1 Research Design

In the current research context, descriptive research design to be the most suitable way as data was gathered via questionnaires and through personal interviews. Descriptive research design enables to analyze each hypothetical concepts and to explore the association between various factors thereby satisfies their purpose of research and to support or to reject hypothesis. The questionnaire was prepared on the basis of previously published surveys and own research works. The first set of questions dealt with consumer satisfaction in general, tailed by questions regarding unique retailing schemes and corresponding characteristics possessed by organic stores comprising of quality of products exhibited, location of the store, overall shop atmosphere and after sales services offered by the firm.

6.2 Sampling Method and Sample Size

Proportionate stratified random sampling and judgment sampling technique was used for the study. A food buyer who is interested in organic fruits and vegetables and who has consumed it at least once is considered as the sample unit. To identify the samples, individuals were asked about their pattern of purchase and their likeliness towards organic fruits and vegetables. Individuals who consider themselves as regular, occasional and potential buyers were taken as samples. Also, the consumers selected were as homogenous as possible to limit adverse impacts on the quality of data. It comprised of individuals with low and intense usage experience with organic food. Individuals over the age of 18 years and those knowledgeable of organic food were considered as sample size for study. Using Morgan's sample size determination formula, the sample size calculated is 200 respondents.

6.3 Area of Research

The number of organic shops available in Kerala is minimal, and hence a catalogue of certified organic stores involved in selling organic products especially fruits and vegetables within the state was obtained from the INDOCERT office located in Aluva town of Ernakulam district of Kerala. . They sell products that are locally produced and transported from other states of India and also from outside India. However, there is a broad range of differently sized shops at different locations. For the current research based on the expert opinion Kochi has been selected as the major research area. This is mainly because there are around 200 supermarkets and departmental stores in Kerala that sells certified organic products, out of which around 30% of the shops, i.e. nearly 60 stores were dealing with organic food products are located in Kochi.

6.4 Sources of Data

Primary data was collected from consumers and retailers and through in-depth interview using a questionnaire. The data collected via face-to-face in-depth interview seems to more accurate, high validity and reliability. Moreover, personal interviews were conducted with experts from various organic agencies in Kerala like INDOCERT, Organic BPS, and Delta Agencies etc. to determine the attitudes and consumer buying behaviour in Kerala towards organic food. Secondary data were preferred, and the information were gathered from organic academic journals, magazines like (Farm n Food, 2007), Kerala Karshakan, and (ICAR Indian

Agriculture, 2016), various websites, reference books like Market Farming Success and government publications etc. Secondary data was gathered from books, research journals, periodicals, newspapers, different issues of RBI announcement, Economic Reviews, Census Reports, Reports of NSSO , (Central and State Statistical Organizations, 2016), various sites and so forth. The product price were gathered from the Economics and Statistics Department. Secondary data was gathered explicitly for this research through electronic library database, which includes, EBSCO Host and Emerald scholarly academic papers.

7. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSIONS

7.1 Descriptive statistics

Generally, extend of consumer satisfaction varies considerably between different shops. On a scale from -2 (Very dissatisfied) to 2 (Very satisfied), the survey results showed that the shop with lowest consumer satisfaction is rated at 1.33 and the shop with the highest consumer satisfaction is rated at 1.84. There is a difference of 0.51 between the two. The mean is at 1.56 which shows that most of the consumers are very satisfied.

In factor analysis, the concept of consumer loyalty is calculated by linking two statements. Firstly “This is one of the best organic shops in which I have ever shopped (on a scale from -2 strongly disagree to +2 strongly agree)” and secondly “compared with other organic shops, how would you compare this shop on a scale from -2 (much worse) to +2 (much better)”. The result showed that the mean of consumer loyalty is considerably lesser than the consumer satisfaction.

Table 1: Consumer satisfaction and Consumer loyalty:

Variables	Mean	SD	Minimum	Maximum
Consumer satisfaction	1.56	0.17	1.33	1.84
Consumer loyalty	0.78	0.24	0.44	1.20

Remarkably, small scale organic retail stores provides the highest consumer satisfaction as well as loyalty. Such are those shops specialised in organic fruit and vegetables, consisting of a lesser range of products (750 products) and the minimum average spending per consumer equals to 350 rupees. The low average payments indicates that the consumers live nearby and are regular to shop. Organic supermarkets represents those shops with the lowest consumer satisfaction. The sales area of supermarkets is the largest in the sample with around 450 m². The shop sells around 1000 products and has an average spending of 850 rupees. The shop has also got sufficient parking space and hence family couldshop easily. The shop with the lowest consumer loyalty is unlike the one with the lowest consumer satisfaction. Out of the socio-demographic statistics collected from the survey, it is known that most of the consumer who shop lives nearby. Even though they are not happy with the shop’s performance, they still purchase from them either due to their habit or due to the shop’s location. On the whole, the results exhibit thatconsumer satisfaction and loyalty are not a matter of size. To an extent the success of the small organic stores indicates recovery for small neighbourhood shops with the new lifestyle strategy of health and wellness.

7.2 Factor analysis

Factor analysis using principal component analysis has been applied to get an overview about the different factors which influences consumersatisfaction and loyalty. The first two variables

(Table 2) converge into one factor which represents consumer loyalty. KMO value of .7 was obtained. Cronbach's alpha indicates a high reliability .72.

Table 2: Factors influencing consumer loyalty in organic retailing:

KMO: 70; Cronbach's alpha: .72; 85% explained variance	Factor Loading
When compared with other organic shops, how would you rate this shop?	.95
This is one of the best organic shops in which I ever shopped.	.89

Factor analysis enables to identify the influence of consumer service, quality of products, shop atmosphere, price satisfaction, clarity of information and shop location over consumer satisfaction and loyalty among organic food retailing. Eight factors (Table 3) were extracted and the alpha values were more than .7 with the exception of variety in range of products, self-service or speed of shopping and extend of information obtained

Table 3: Reliability of extracted factors

Factor	Cronbach's alpha
Consumer service and confidence	.88
Quality and freshness of products	.85
Taste of fruit and vegetables	.86
Location of the organic shop	.87
Variety in range of products	.56
Self-service and speed of shopping	.53
Extend of information obtained	.48

KMO: 88; 68% explained variance

The discovered factors vary from the proposed model in Fig. 1. Mostly in the case of different product aspects and groups. Organic shoppers are characterized by means of differentiated needs and taste preferences

7.3 Regression analysis

Research intends to identify the factors influencing consumer satisfaction and loyalty. Due to substantial dissimilarities incurring among consumer satisfaction and consumer loyalty, it is essential to find both the factors using two specific regression analyses. The first stage of regression analysis deals with the backgrounds of consumer satisfaction. Consumer satisfaction for each individual consumer is influenced by the factors such as consumer service and confidence, quality and freshness of fruit and vegetables, variety in range of products, location of the organic shop, taste of the fruit and vegetables, self-service and speed of shopping and extend of information obtained about organic products (see Table 4). Changes in these factors explain nearly half of the variation in consumer satisfaction (R-square=0.41). All other factors have no substantial influence over consumer satisfaction. The high relevance of consumer service and confidence indicate the fact that psychological and emotional components of each individual consumer affects the buying decision especially for the small retailers

Table 4: Regression model to explain consumer satisfaction among organic retailing:

Independent variables	Beta	T
Consumer service and confidence	.43	10.11
Quality and freshness of products	.44	10.60

Taste of fruit and vegetables	.11	3.12
Location of the organic shop	.13	2.87
Variety in range of products	.11	2.79
Self-service and speed of shopping	.10	2.43
Extend of information obtained	.12	2.68

Depending variable: Consumer satisfaction; Adj. R2 =.41; F = 46.94, p<.0001; p<.01; p<.05

In the second stage, regression analysis was used to test the link between consumer loyalty and main variables. Apart from the revealed factors consumer loyalty was influenced by two single items: low price (price satisfaction) and interior decoration of the shop

Table 5: Regression model to explain consumer satisfaction in organic retailing:

Independent variables	Beta	T
Consumer service and confidence	.37	8.44
Quality and freshness of fruit and vegetables	.32	7.36
Variety in the range of products	.27	7.05
Low price (Price satisfaction) (single item)	.12	2.88
Interior decoration of the shop (single item)	.11	2.78
Location of the shop	.10	2.65
Extend of information obtained	.10	2.43

Depending variable: Consumer satisfaction; Adj. R2 =.46; F = 51.17; p<.001; p<.01;

In both regression analyses the influence of consumer service and confidence, quality and freshness of fruit and vegetables, and the variety in range of products were the most important factors. However, the influence of a wider collection is greater for consumer satisfaction than for loyalty. This could be beneficial for those consumer looking for a wide range of organic products. Interestingly, price satisfaction does not have a strong influence which could be explained by the higher willingness to pay for organic shops

7.4. Measuring Consumer Satisfaction, Loyalty and Economic Performance

7.4.1 Measuring Consumer Satisfaction and Loyalty

The effect of consumer satisfaction and loyalty can be measured, by analysing its effects on consumer retention. Two questions which represents the loyalty of consumer were included in the questionnaire. The first question was regarding the recommendation of organic shop to other potential consumers while the second dealt with their shopping frequency. The results from correlation analysis reveals that there exist a small connection between satisfaction and loyalty. The relation between shopping frequency and satisfaction is not significant. However, recommendation and satisfaction show a correlation of .229. If the retailers are able to serve his consumer with an outstanding service or a broader collection of organic products, the consumer will visit and use the shop more often and will recommend the shop to others

Table 6: Correlation between satisfaction and loyalty:

Independent variables	Satisfaction		Loyalty	
	r	P	R	p
Recommendation	0.229	0.000	0.306	0.000
Shopping Frequency	0.067	0.053	0.149	0.000

7.4.2 Measuring Consumer Satisfaction and Economic performance

In this section, the link between consumer satisfaction and economic performance is measured. During the survey, it was difficult to get adequate data regarding profits and margins earned from for all retailers. For this reason, Schroeder (1994) method of turnover per square meter sales area was used. The regression analyses results reveal that over 50 organic consumers and ten organic shops showed a good example of strength and statistical significance. According to Gomez et al. (2004) “The connection between satisfaction and economic success is clearly larger than in conventional retailing”.

Table 7: Regression model to explain economic performance in organic retailing:

Independent Variables	Beta	T
Consumer Satisfaction	.61	2.50

Depending variable; Annual turnover per m² sales area; Adj. R² =.32; F = 6, 11; p<.05
 The R-square of the regression analysis between economic success and consumer satisfaction is marginally lower. 28 % of the turnover per m² sales area can be explained with the factor consumer satisfaction (Table 7). Altogether, the high relevance for the operating result moves the management of consumer satisfaction and loyalty into the focal point of marketing activities

Table 8: Regression model to explain economic performance in organic retailing:

Independent Variables	Beta	T
Consumer Satisfaction	.57	2.44

Depending variable: Annual turnover per m² sales area; Adj. R² =.28; F = 4, 96; p<.0.

8. CONCLUSIONS

Consumer satisfaction is considered as the key component for business profitability because once they reach their satisfaction level, it may influence them to attain the firm’s service continuously. The element of consumer satisfaction is closely connected with the economic performance mainly for small and medium sized organic retailers. Taking into consideration, the limited number of shops surveyed, it is revealed that consumer satisfaction is responsible for 40 % of the economic success. However, specialized shop do not carry out consumer satisfaction surveys due to the heavy expenditure involved in market research and missing market orientation. After analysing the collected data it is evident that consumer satisfaction act as a beginning for consumer’s loyalty. If they are highly satisfied with the services, then it is obvious that they are loyal too. The survey highlights the outstanding significance of consumer loyalty which can developed through word of mouth communication and shopping frequency

A shop owner is likely to achieve consumer loyalty if he can convince his consumers with lower prices, better shopping atmosphere and a larger variety of products offered. The result of the questionnaire survey conducted to determine the influence of consumer satisfaction and loyalty among organic retailers, it seems that all the consumers are more or less satisfied with the service offered and are looking forward for more quality service than previous. However, even though the service level seems to be satisfactory, the organic stores still needs some modifications in the strategies to keep the service standard high. For example, updating information and informing consumer about new products still need some upgrading. Thus, based on the study it can be said that even though a majority of consumers are satisfied with the service provided by organic retail stores, the company needs to understand its weakness and work hard for the improvement that could meet consumers perceived service level. The consumers always have a tendency to predict the value of the product before purchasing, at the point of purchase and after purchasing. This shows that their level of satisfaction may vary accordingly. The survey indicates that major determinants of consumer satisfaction differentiate largely between supermarkets and small scale retailers. Among the two, purchase from small scale retailers are highly dependent on the personal relationship and on consumers' trust. This is because of the revealed relevance of Consumer service and confidence being the most important factor. Staff management and knowledge turn out to be other crucial factors for small retailer. The results from regression analysis reveals that the overall satisfaction of the consumers accounts for 40 % of sales per square meter area. Consumer satisfaction is also backed by organic product quality, service provided by the retail staffs, the overall atmosphere of the shop and finally the price-performance ratio. Factor analysis categorizes consumer service and product quality to be the major elements for consumer satisfaction. Correlation analysis confirms that consumer loyalty act as a greater source for recommendation of retail stores than consumer satisfaction. The paper ends with emphasize on the role of store atmosphere, Consumer service and product quality as the main factors influencing consumer's decision to purchase organic products

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