

ABSTRACT

NATCHA PETCHDAKUL: OPPORTUNITIES OF THAI ORGANIC FOOD IN THE EUROPEAN COUNTRIES: CASE STUDIES OF GERMANY, THE UNITED KINGDOM, AND FRANCE.

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Currently, as many food related diseases such as mad cow disease or bird flu are increasingly occur, people try to find the way to escape from them. Organic food is another alternative to ensure what people consume is safe since it is a kind of products that are produced using no chemical substance. However, only a few theoretical-based research relating to consumer behavior towards organic food has been conducted.

The current study tries to explore the relationships between marketing mix variables, socio-demographic factors and European purchasing behaviors towards organic food, especially Thai organic food. Moreover, the strengths and weaknesses of Thai organic food are solicited, and European consumer profiles are also developed.

By conducting the survey research in the 344 EU people using quota sampling with self-administrative questionnaire, the obtained data is analyzed by factor analysis with varimax rotation, Crosstabulation technique using chi-square, ANOVA, and one-sample t-test. Moreover, cluster analysis is further performed to group the consumers into more meaningful organic buyer and non-buyer clusters.

The results from the study, while provide some confirmation to those found in previous popular press and trade journals, many of them are contrary to. Demographic factors show no effect on purchase frequency and purchase amount of organic food, except for the income factor. Some interaction effects between

demographic and marketing variables are found. While Thai product appearance is perceived worse than that of domestic, nutrition value and product safety and taste show interesting outcomes. Cluster analysis yields four groups of organic buyers—‘Health, environmental and social concerns’, ‘Health-conscious’, ‘Environmental’, and ‘In-trend’, while three groups of non-buyers are obtained—‘Environmental and social concerns’, ‘Price-conscious’, and ‘Inert’.

Managers can use the research findings in developing more effective organic food marketing strategies that better meet the needs and characteristics of each consumer group. Policy implications to promote the organic farming and consumption are also provided.