

A STUDY ON THE FACTORS AFFECTING CONSUMERS' BUYING BEHAVIOR TOWARDS ORGANIC FOOD PRODUCTS IN CHENNAI CITY

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ABSTRACT

The primary aim of this empirical study is to examine the customer perceptions of organic food products and also to ascertain which factors influence customers' purchases of organic goods. The rising demographic dividend, purchasing power, and interest in organic commodities' alleged health and wellness advantages have bolstered India's organic food market. This research is being conducted in Chennai. The current investigation is exploratory and descriptive, including qualitative and quantitative research methods. Initially, the study had an experimental component required for data collection and assessment. The investigation's second phase is survey-based descriptive research, which employs a small sample of customers. The study's response rate resulted in a total sample size of 208. Consumer information is factored, and descriptively examined. The result reveals that most of the consumers are pleased with organic food products and would recommend them to others. They are hesitant to buy organic food items for various reasons, including a need for more trust in organic food products. The respondents are opined that consumption of organic food products helps to maintain health consciousness and food safety are willing to purchase them even when traditional alternatives are on sale. Moreover, organic food marketers and farmers educate customers and help them learn more about organic food products.

Keywords: Consumer Awareness, Customer Perceptions, Buying Behavior, Health Consciousness, Organic Foods

Introduction

In the early 1990s, India started exporting tea to Europe and set up a joint venture with German organic food companies. There is a huge assortment of almost 300 products available in 20 different product categories. Tea, fruit, maize, grains, vegetables, spices, completed items, and organic cotton are a few of these. Moreover, in 2019–20, exports reached 6.389 lakh MT. Organic foods worth over Rs. 4,686 crores were exported (689 million R.S.). The United States, the European Union, Canada, Switzerland, Australia, Japan, Israel, the United Arab Emirates, New Zealand, and Vietnam are just a few of the countries that import organic products. In terms of realised export value, processed foods like soy meal are followed by oilseeds (13.25 percent), plantation crop products like tea and coffee (9.61 percent), cereals and millets (8.19 percent), spices and condiments (5.20 percent), dry fruits (4.98 percent), sugar (3.91 percent), and medicinal plants (3.84 percent) (NPOP) Organic products are getting more popular in India as more people are willing to eat organic food and as their attitudes towards organic food items have changed significantly. (Hossain, M. T. B., & Lim, P. X. 2016). When it comes to organic food products, India is filled with inconsistencies.

While it is growing to become a big player in the global market, particularly in Europe, the domestic organic food industry is still in its infancy. People's views and perceptions of organic food products have changed significantly in India as a result of the COVID-19 epidemic. The shift in consumer tastes and purchasing patterns towards organic foods has been mostly influenced by customer attitudes and knowledge, which is projected to continue fueling market expansion for organic foods (Altarawneh, M. 2013).

Several initiatives have been developed by the Indian Government to support organic farming. Farmers, producers, and consumers all gain from these schemes. The National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture (NMSA), the Paramparagat Krishi Vigyan Yojana (PKVY), the Rashtriya Krishi Vigyan Yojana (RKVY), the National Food Security Mission (NFSM), the National Horticulture Mission (NHM), and the Horticulture Mission for the North East and the Himalayan States were all introduced by the Indian Government.

Organic farming is a farming method that has been practised by farmers since antiquity and is devoid of synthetic pesticides, growth promoters, fertilisers, and feed additives for livestock. according to the FAO/WHO Codex Alimentarius Commission's definition (2007). Krystallis, A., & Krystallis, A. Arvanitoyannis, I. S. (2004). An integrated production management method known as organic agriculture promotes and improves the health of the agroecosystem. It encompasses biological cycles, soil activity, and biodiversity. It places a focus on utilizing natural inputs (such as minerals and products generated from plants) and avoiding synthetic pesticides and fertilizers. Because it uses natural inputs, organic agriculture differs from conventional farming in that it adheres to the principle of sustainability.

Moreover, environmental practices like intercropping, crop rotation, mulching, etc., as well as the enhancement of soil fertility and structure, constitute the fundamental principles that distinguish organic agriculture from other systems. Organic farming is becoming more and more well-known. It is used in practically every nation on earth. According to the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), both at the national and international levels, the rapidly evolving trend away from chemical-based agriculture towards organic and eco-friendly farming systems is a major cause for concern.

The most recent survey estimates that India has 6,50,000 organic growers and 5.2 million hectares of organic land. The majority of the world's organic producers are located in India. A product of organic farming, which forgoes the use of synthetic pesticides and fertilisers, is food. Consumers who are more aware of the health risks are supporting this shift towards organic agriculture, which is why organic food merchants are seeing an increase in demand for their products.

Consumption of organic food products is rising overall among consumers. Consumer awareness of environmental and health issues is to blame for this trend. Consumer opinions about organic food are influenced by demographic characteristics such as availability, health, and education. Consumers of organic food are more generally satisfied than those of inorganic food (Paul & Rana, 2012). The market for organic products is still in its infancy in Resource Management and India, therefore many consumers need to be made aware of the advantages that the products and the environment offer. Marketing efforts should concentrate on removing these barriers in order to expand the market for organic products in India. The price and availability of organic products are the main deterrents to their purchase (Laheri & Arya, 2015).

Review of Literature

Sharma, Khare, Kautish, (2022). This study looked at how attitudes and behavioural intentions towards organic foods were affected by instrumental and terminal values. It makes use of the Value-Attitude-Behavior (VAB) model and Cognitive Hierarchical Model. A careful analysis of earlier investigations led to the discovery of the conceptual model. The Smart PLS programme for partial least square structural equation modelling is used to analyze the measurement and structural models. According to the results, attitude affects attitude, which then determines behavioural intentions for both terminal and instrumental value for organic food items. The instrumental value, however, had a more significant impact on both philosophical and behavioural goals compared to the terminal value. The study's conclusions should help organic food marketers create plans that are in line with both terminal and instrumental values through advertising.

Rukmani, Raju, (2022). Due to its advanced demographic dividend, greater purchasing power, and growing interest in certain organic commodities' purported health and wellness advantages, India's consumption of organic food and beverage has increased recently. Foods grown organically are becoming more and more popular every day because of their dietary and health advantages. India's economy remains centred on agriculture, which in 2020–2021 was responsible for 60 percent of all employment and 19.9 percent of the nation's GDP. India accounts for 30% of the world's certified organic producers, but only accounts for 3% (1.9 million hectares) of the 57.8 million hectares of land that is used for organic farming. Examining the factors that affect consumers' decisions to buy organic food is the main goal of the study. Geographically restricted to the GHMC region, this study is being conducted in Hyderabad, Tamil Nadu. By exploring the many perspectives on organic food products from the perspective of the consumer, this study seeks to fill in the information gap. Exploratory and descriptive research approaches, both qualitative and quantitative, are used in the current study. As part of the desk work needed to gather and review the necessary materials, the initial phase of the research was exploratory. In the second phase of the project, survey-based descriptive research is carried out among 500 consumers after being randomly selected. The consumer data is analyzed using factor analysis, chi-square, and descriptive statistics. The findings suggest that two components, the labels for nutrition and disease prevention and health maintenance were formed from the seven elements. In order to determine consumer preference for and satisfaction with organic food products, comparable studies should also be carried out in other areas of Hyderabad and the inter-districts of the state of Tamil Nadu.

The research conducted by Basha, et al. in 2021 attempts to better understand UAE consumers' sentiments towards organic food. In order to investigate potential influences, six criteria were chosen. These traits were established from recent study on the shopping preferences of consumers of organic foods. Health and lifestyle, environmental concern, safety and trust, convenience, cost, and subjective norms and attitude were all chosen as independent criteria. Purchase intention was the dependent variable under investigation. To investigate the influence of factors on buying purpose, six hypotheses based on determinants were created. 423 respondents were chosen at random for the data collection. To evaluate whether or not these six factors had a substantial impact, multiple regression analysis was used. The study revealed that all six variables positively impact consumer intention to purchase organic food. The implications for stakeholders and policymakers indicate a need to expand organic food availability to a broader audience so that the supply chain for organic foods and goods goes beyond supermarkets to smaller grocery stores and corner shops.

An overview of the organic food and market (World and Indian Scenario) The annual market for organic food has been growing daily on a global scale. The overall organic food industry increased by 23% annually in 2010 to reach 59.1 billion dollars in the United States. The United States (17272 acres) had the most land acquisition for organic apples in 2001. Italy, Germany, France, Switzerland, and Austria are the top producing nations of organic fruit out of all of Europe (Yadav et al., 2010).

The market share of organic products is growing quickly, reaching 47% in the EU, 28% in the USA, and 28% in Canada, according to the National Program on Organic production 2012. The market is expanding for Singapore and Italy at a steady rate as well. Although a substantial portion of this need is met by local producers in these nations, there is also a sizable demand for many other goods and quantities of the already existent commodities. Opportunities will arise as a result of this supply-demand imbalance for developing nations like India to investigate. Europe and the United States of America are both awash in organic food goods, and Asia isn't far behind with India being a key player.

The organic food industry in India is only now beginning to grow. Due to rising disposable income and improved health awareness, there is a greater domestic demand for organic food. Marketing organic products to wealthy, health-conscious people domestically and in overseas markets is extremely profitable (Manaloor et al., 2016). The market for organic food has expanded significantly during the past few years. Yet, just around 1% of all agricultural land is certified organic globally, covering 43.16 million hectares. In 1999, 11 million hectares of land were used for organic farming; this is approximately four times that amount (Lernoud, Willer, 2016). Although consumption in developed countries is increasing, developing countries still need to expand their domestic markets for the organic food business. The localization of organic foods is hampered by a variety of factors in developing countries. A few of these included a high cost, accessibility, brand trust, familiarity with organic foods, etc. (Chaliang, Huang, 2012).

Theoretical Background

Factors influencing Consumer Buying Behavior towards Organic Food Products:

Akbar, A., Danish, M., Ali, S., Ahmad, M. A., & Akbar, M. (2019). This survey's objective is to learn more about actual customer purchasing trends. Future studies in this area may examine how eating certain organic foods, such as organic milk, yoghurt, cheese, vegetables, and fruits, affects health. In addition, this study focused on Pakistani customers; future studies should take a cross-cultural sample into account to fully comprehend this issue. P. Agarwal (2019). The main focus of this essay is on the relationship between views regarding organic food, arbitrary standards, and the desire to buy organic food. Several locations are investigating and putting into practise the implications of research.

The study "Factors influencing young consumers' purchase intention of organic food items" was examined by Ayub, Naziman, and Samat. (2018). He discovered three independent variables: social influence, environmental awareness, and health consciousness. The purpose of this study is to identify the variables affecting young consumers' inclination to buy organic food. The researcher also suggested that future studies concentrate on how young consumers' intentions to buy organic food products are influenced by their awareness of their health. According to descriptive analysis, respondents most frequently highlighted health consciousness as a factor. Yet, because there was no discernible correlation between this independent variable and the dependent variable, it was finally determined that it was unsupported as a factor.

Aertsens, Mondelaers, Verbeke, Buysse, and Huylenbroeck (2011) conducted a study to examine the factors affecting both objective and subjective information regarding the manufacturing of organic food. Also, it is the connection between these two types of knowledge and consumer attitudes and motivations towards the consumption of organic food. It is necessary to conduct further research to clarify the Expectancy Value Theory.

Aertsens, Mondelaers, Verbeke, Buysse, and Huylenbroeck (2009) published a paper titled "Personal determinants of organic food consumption: a review." The purpose of this study is to present an overview within a framework that connects Schwartz's theory of values with the idea of planned behavior (TPB). Numerous research indicated that the primary motivation for purchasing organic food is health, which is associated with a sense of security.

Consumer Attitude and Perceptions towards Organic Food Products

The way that customers eat is rapidly evolving in the modern world. The organic niche industry is about to explode. Producing and making more organic products available on the market has significantly boosted the economy during the past few years. Because organic food is healthier and less likely to contain chemicals than conventional food, many people have begun to favour it over conventional food. The attitudes and views of consumers towards organic food items are greatly influenced by their purchase behaviour. A thorough assessment of past studies has also allowed for the identification of the problems, worries, and key causes. The decision to purchase organic food is mostly influenced by gender, age, income, education, and whether or not there are children living in the home.

Chiciudean (2012) claims that consumers eat this meal for a variety of reasons. Yet, the majority of them concern animal welfare and environmental issues, and the factors that sway buyers depend on their age and gender. The primary benefit of eating organic food is its flavour. Quality Price and the fashionable idea of being "organic" have an impact on women as well. People of different ages exhibit significant variances when it comes to promotions, friend recommendations, and advertising. Advertising has a greater impact on children than on people of any other age.

Shafie & Rennie (2012) and Mukul et al. (2013) have tried to understand the consumer perception towards organic food consumption and they critically analysed the primary data collected from the customers. The result supports that health and environmental concerns are the major factors determining the organic food consumption in the study area. Mehra and Ratna (2014) suggested that six imperative factors are very vital for organic food consumption such as, health consciousness, product information, value for money, accessibility, and trust. Sharma and Bali (2014) stated that health concerns are a major key factor determining the organic product consumption in the urban areas. Sivathanu (2015), also added that consumers prefer to buy organic food products because they perceive that they are safe, nutritious, and environment friendly.

Statement of the problem

In 2020, the organic food market in India had a value of Rs. 849.5 million. According to the study "India Organic Food Market Forecast and Opportunities, 2021, the market is also anticipated to grow between 2021 and 2026 at a CAGR of almost 20.5 percent, reaching a value of close to Rs. 2601 million. The expansion of the organic market throughout India presents a sizable possibility for this study's execution. This research was conducted in Tamil Nadu and is limited to the area around Chennai. It is the Tamil Nadu State's capital region with the best population density. The market has to be further explored for organic products. In Chennai and Tamil Nadu, this speciality marketing method is becoming more and more relevant. Due to the customers' inadequate awareness and lack of information, the purchase behaviour for organic food goods in Tamil Nadu state is generally different from the norm. So, this study is intended to help close this information gap by examining the many perspectives on organic food products of consumers. The study consists of consumer attitudes, availability, organic food purchasing intentions, ethical self-identity, health consciousness, and awareness of organic foods. It becomes a crucial factor that encourages the growth of the organic food sector and generates market demand.

Aim of the study

The present study aims to explore the consumer awareness and buying behaviour towards organic food products in the Chennai city of Tamil Nadu and to identify the factors influencing the buying behaviour of consumers towards organic food products.

Research Methodology

This study employs both qualitative and quantitative research methods. In the second stage of the study, descriptive research is conducted using a survey approach. After completing the literature review, the researcher concentrates on the technique, developing objectives in conjunction with the problem statement and selecting a good research design. Chennai is the capital city of Tamil Nadu and has the most excellent population density. The study was limited to Chennai and Tamil Nadu.

Additionally, the region of Chennai is split into four zones: East Chennai, West Chennai, North Chennai, and South Chennai. However, the survey will include 230 consumers, which is higher than the minimum sample size necessary 216 questionnaires were returned from the 220 persons contacted, with 208 containing the requisite coverage and information. There are 123 males and 85 females. The study's response rate is the Sampling Approach to adopt the Purposive sampling technique used to identify individuals who consume (or have consumed) organic foods. Primary data was obtained using questionnaires via Google Forms, Emails, and Whatsapp. Only a few responders had their opinions documented in a tangible questionnaire. The study employs the frequency approach, descriptive statistics, and factor analysis.

Data analysis

Demographic	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	123	59.13
	Female	85	40.87
Age	<20	92	44.23
	21-30	53	25.48
	31-40	36	17.31
	>40	27	12.98
MaritalStatus	Unmarried	94	45.20
	Married	108	51.92
	Divorced	5	2.40
	Widowed	1	0.48
Family	Joint	80	38.46
	Nuclear	128	61.54
EducationalQualification	Up toSSC	9	4.32
	SSC	9	4.32
	HSC	18	8.66
	Degrees Above	172	82.70
Occupation	Private Employee	103	49.55
	Self Employee	39	18.76
	Business	25	12.01
	GovtEmployee	16	7.69
	HouseWife	14	6.74
	Student	11	5.28
Income	10001-20000	63	30.29
	20001-40000	51	24.52
	40001-60000	51	24.52
	above60000	43	20.68
ResidentialArea	NorthChennai	57	27.40
	SouthChennai	64	30.77
	EastChennai	63	30.28
	WestChennai	24	11.54
	Total	208	100.0

Table No 1: Demographic Profile of the respondents

**Source: Primary data

Table 1 indicates that the majority of the respondents are male (59.13%), married (51.92%), degree holders (82.70%) and hailing from nuclear families (61.54%). The sizable portion of the respondents are hailing from

the age group of less than 20 years (44.23%), private employees (49.55%), earning a monthly income of less than Rs. 20,000 and residing in East Chennai (30.28%).

Variables	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Food Habits	Only Vegetarian	57	27.40
	Both Veg & Non - Vegetarian	151	72.60
Earners in Family	Only One	69	33.17
	Two Members	76	36.53
	Three Members	40	19.24
	Above Three Members	23	11.06
Awareness on OFP	Yes	176	84.62
	No	32	15.38
	Total	208	100.0

Table No .2 Distribution of Consumer Food habits Products and Awareness
Source: Questionnaire Analysis

According to the table, most respondents consume vegetarian and non-vegetarian meals. 151 (72.60 %) fall under the vegetarian and non-vegetarian categories. Only 57 (27.40 %) of them are vegetarians, 69 (33.17 %) have only one earning person, and 76 (36.53 %) have two gaining members. Consumer awareness of Organic Food Products (OFP) indicates that most consumers are aware of OFP. They account for 84.62 % (176) of the total 208 responders. Only 15.38 % (32) are ignorant of the need to be made aware of products.

ReasonsforPurchase	N	Min	Max	Mean	S.E.	S.D.	CV	Rank
Maintain Good Health	208	1	5	3.2	0.08	1.592	0.50	6
Prefer Taste and Feeling	208	1	5	3.43	0.06	1.28	0.37	5
Pesticide Free	208	1	5	3.49	0.06	1.248	0.36	4
Quality of Food	208	1	5	3.69	0.06	1.223	0.33	1
Environmental Friendly	208	1	5	3.69	0.06	1.269	0.34	2
Fresh	208	1	5	3.67	0.06	1.24	0.35	3
Status	208	1	5	2.69	0.07	1.451	0.54	7

Table No.3: Motives to Buy Organic Food Products

The data presented in table 3 shows the descriptive statistics like Minimum, Maximum Sum, Mean, Standard Error, and Standard Deviation on the Reason for purchasing Organic food Products. The coefficient of variation is the basis for assigning ranks to each statement. From the table, the Quality of food and Environment-friendly products are the significant reasons to influence consumers to buy organic food products. Fresh, Pesticide free products, preferred taste & feeling, Maintain good health and motivate consumers to purchase organic food products.

FactorsMotivated	N	Mini	Maxi	Mean	Std.Deviati on
It helps with weight loss	208	1	5	2.83	1.142
Helps Fight Diabetes	208	1	5	4.14	.927
Prevent Gallstone	208	1	5	3.74	1.001
Reduces high blood pressure	208	1	5	3.77	1.029
It helps women endure menstrual cramps	208	1	5	3.87	1.085
Protein-rich	208	1	5	3.87	.958
Healthy growth	208	1	5	4.12	.935

Table No. 4 Factors Motivate to Buy Organic Food Products
Source: Primary Data

The above table shows the mean and standard deviation of the factors motivated to buy organic food products. The study finds that the Helps fight diabetes factor has the highest mean with 4.14, Healthy growth – 4.12, Protein rich, and Helps women endure menstrual cramps with an equal mean of 3.87. Reduces high blood pressure by 3.77 and Prevents gallstones having the lowest standard being 3.74. After analyzing the motivating factors, assessing the highly vital factors that motivate buying organic food products is essential.

Component	Initial Eigenvalues Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	3.764	47.050	47.050	3.760	47.004	47.004
2	1.048	13.100	60.150	1.052	13.146	60.150

Table No.5 KMO and Bartlett's Test for Factor Analysis on Factors motivated to buy Organic Foods Products
Source: Primary Data, Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

The KMO measure of sampling adequacy is good if the score comes above 0.70. This analysis, which is 0.870, shows that the KMO test of Sphericity is good.

Findings

The survey discovered that In the study, it was discovered that 123 (59.13 %) were male and 85 (40.87 %) were female respondents. Considering the age, most of the replies reside in the group of fewer than 20 years compared to every other age group. Marital status-wise, the majority of them were married (108, 51.92 %). (51.92%). A nucleus family comprised 128 (61.54%) of the respondents. The educational qualification of the respondents in the survey suggests that the majority of them, 172 (82.72 %), are well qualified with degrees and above education. The study was done at the Greater Chennai Municipal Corporation. The majority of the respondents are working as private employees. 103 (49.55 %) and neighboring 63 (30.29 %) of their income fall under Rs. 10 001-Rs. 20 000. Based on the residential area of the respondents, most of the respondents belong to South Chennai, and 63 (30.28 %) live in East Chennai. The majority of respondents consume both vegetarian and non-vegetarian meals. 151 (72.60 %) fall under the vegetarian and non-vegetarian categories. Only 57 (27.40 %) of them are vegetarians, 69 (33.17 %) have only one earning person, and 76 (36.53 %) have two earning members. Consumer awareness of Organic Food Products (OFP) indicates that most consumers are aware of OFP. They account for 84.62 % (176) of the total 76 respondents. Only 15.38 % (32) of them need to be aware of organic food products. As a result of the survey, it is clear that food quality and environmental friendliness are the primary factors influencing customers to purchase organic food products. It identified two statements from seven statements under variables influencing consumer buying behavior toward organic food products. These factors influence health maintenance, nutrition, and disease prevention. Most people purchase organic food from supermarkets and specialty organic farm produce stores. It must raise awareness of its goods and promote them via the internet, digital marketing, and electronic media. Customers purchase organic food products on a sporadic basis. So, supermarkets and stores that sell organic food products can use different sales promotion methods to boost sales in the short term and build a brand over time.

Conclusion

Today's consumer lifestyles are dynamic and ever-changing. Growing health consciousness, more disposable income, and a rising number of contemporary retail outlets across the country all contribute to the organic food segment's rise. Most respondents claimed that purchasing organic food is motivated by food quality and environmental stewardship. Following that, it was discovered that the majority of consumers prefer organic food products. The study claims that food safety concerns significantly influence customer purchasing behavior. It has been discovered that most consumers are pleased with organic food products. They are hesitant to buy organic food items for various reasons, including a need for more trust in organic food products. After analyzing the motivating factors, assessing the highly vital factors that motivate buying organic food products is essential. Most of the respondents consume organic food products to maintain good health and are willing to purchase them even when traditional alternatives are on sale. Moreover, organic food marketers and farmers educate customers and help them learn more about organic food products.

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