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"Determinants of Consumer Choice in the Organic Products Market: Analyzing Motivations, Perceptions, and Purchasing Behavior"

Dr. Asjad Usmani, Dr. Pramod Kumar Nayak, Dr. Vikas Rao Vadi, Ms. Naghma Abidin,
Mr. Depak Kumar, Anzar Ali Warsi

Associate Professor, Department of Commerce & Management,
Don Bosco Institute of Technology, Affiliated to GGSIP University,
Okhla Road, New Delhi- 110025

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3953-212X>

Associate Professor, Department of Commerce & Management,
Don Bosco Institute of Technology, Affiliated to GGSIP University,
Okhla Road, New Delhi- 110025

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2264-9911>

Director, Don Bosco Institute of Technology,
Affiliated to GGSIP University, Okhla Road, New Delhi- 110025

Assistant Professor, Department of Commerce & Management,
Don Bosco Institute of Technology, Affiliated to GGSIP University, Okhla Road, New Delhi- 110025

Assistant Professor, Department of Commerce & Management,
Don Bosco Institute of Technology, Affiliated to GGSIP University, Okhla Road, New Delhi- 110025

B.Com(H) Student, Don Bosco Institute of Technology,
Affiliated to GGSIP University, Okhla Road, New Delhi- 110025

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Abstract

Growing numbers of individuals are turning to organic farming as a way to improve their health and the environment. This is a result of numerous international problems with food safety and the environment that have recently come to light. While organic food and farming have long existed in India, the green revolution has brought about a transformation in people's lifestyles. People's eating habits have evolved during the last ten years, particularly with regard to food. Because organic food is grown using natural resources and organic fertilisers, it is healthier for you. Because of this, customers favour it. Because organic food items are safer and of greater quality, more people are switching to them. There are no chemical residues or pesticides in these goods. This study aimed to investigate the reasons behind customers' preference for organic products as well as many elements that affect their purchasing decisions. It also aimed to know the opinion about safety concern of organic product among male and female consumers.

Keywords: Organic Products, Consumer Behaviour, Preference, Consumption

INTRODUCTION:

In India, organic farming and food production have been practised for a while, but the Green Revolution changed how farming and eating habits worked for a few decades. In the past ten years, people's eating habits have changed, especially when it comes to food. Consumers are starting to prefer organic food because they believe it's better for their health. Organic food is made using natural resources and organic manure, which attracts consumers. People are interested in organic food because it's of high quality and safety, without pesticides or chemical residues. As more individuals search for ways to live healthier, more environmentally friendly, and more sustainable lives without pesticides, organic food is becoming more popular.

Since different nations have varying requirements for items to be certified as "organic," there is no single definition of what constitutes "organic." Simply said, organic food is food that has undergone minimal processing to preserve its natural flavour and nutritional value without the use of artificial additives, preservatives, or radiation. Organic products are produced using eco-friendly procedures and growing methods that consider both the characteristics of the finished product and the manufacturing processes.

Understanding consumer choice in the organic products market is crucial for businesses, policymakers, and marketers aiming to promote sustainable consumption patterns. This literature review explores the determinants influencing consumer choice, focusing on motivations, perceptions, and purchasing behaviours.

Consumer Preference on Organic Products:

Since different nations have varying requirements for items to be certified as "organic," there is no single definition of what constitutes "organic." Simply said, organic food is food that has undergone minimal processing to preserve its natural flavour and nutritional value without the use of artificial additives, preservatives, or radiation. Organic products are produced using eco-friendly procedures and growing methods that consider both the characteristics of the finished product and the manufacturing processes.

The majority of people in the modern society use organic products and are generally friendly towards them. Consumers are well aware of the advantages of organic products for restoring human health and giving them energy. Despite the fact that organic foods are very healthy for the body, less individuals in India purchase them than in developed countries.

India is not a new adopter of the organic agricultural concept. India has been using it for a very long time. Organic agricultural methods, which heavily favoured the use of fertilisers and insecticides derived from plants and animals, were crucial to the ancient Indian civilization's success. Although the term "organic farming" has grown in popularity recently, its history dates back to 10,000 years ago, when farmers only used natural resources for farming. Our ancient literature, including the Rigveda, Ramayana, Mahabharata, and Kautilya Arthashastra, among others, makes references to a variety of organic inputs. Traditional farming methods that have been developed throughout the years in innumerable villages and farming communities are the foundation of organic agriculture. With cow dung being widely used as a natural fertiliser, it served as the foundation of the Indian economy.

India is home to the Indus Valley Civilization, one of the oldest civilizations in the world, and as a nation, it has a wealth of historical knowledge that has been preserved in various books and literature. Our forefathers amassed knowledge in a variety of fields, including as the

environment, agriculture, planetary motions, geometry, math, Vaastu*, health, and the humanities. Their discoveries are superior to those of contemporary science in many ways. *Remember that "Vaastu" refers to the conventional Indian framework for building and design.

Organic foods are essential for reducing dangers to farmworkers, their families, and consumers' health. Organic products lessen exposure to dangerous compounds in food, land, air, and water by avoiding toxic and persistent chemicals in farming practises. For kids, who are more vulnerable to the effects of pesticides, this is especially crucial. Parents now have the option to choose items that were made without the use of these poisons thanks to the introduction of organic food and fibre products to the market.

Significance of the Study:

People are buying more organic products these days, which indicates that they have a positive attitude towards them. They are becoming more aware of the benefits of organic products, such as improving their health and providing energy. Despite the many advantages of organic products, the demand for them is still growing, especially in countries like India. Recently, researchers have conducted several studies to understand the factors that influence consumer' decisions to purchase organic products. The goal of this study is to investigate various factors that affect people's choices when it comes to buying organic products.

Review of Literature:

When it came to organic food, Nilgiri district consumers placed a higher value on aspects like health, environmental safety, knowledge, and culture. They didn't care about organic food's flavour, colour, or other characteristics, though. **Mr. Sathis Kumar and Dr. E. Muthukumar (2016).**

The public was highly aware of pictures and availability, but they were not entirely devoted to organic food. Without a doubt, the respondents were drawn to organic food items. Therefore, in order to successfully sell organic food goods, marketers must develop campaigns that are both moral and realistic. They also need to make their products readily available in terms of quantity and diversity. **T. Mohanasoundari , A. Kalaivani (2016)**

The attitude of consumers towards organic foods is influenced by factors including gender, monthly income, place of living, and level of health.**Rupesh Mervin and R.Velmurugan (2013).**

Customers that are relatively older, have better levels of education, and make higher incomes favour buying organic vegetables. The main barrier was thought to be the cost of the produce, followed by poor availability and ignorance.**Shanmugapriya K.S., Gopal S. Murali, Swaminathan B. (2014).**

Motivations for Choosing Organic Products

Research consistently identifies health consciousness as a primary motivation for purchasing organic products. Lockie et al. (2002) found that consumers perceive organic foods as healthier and safer due to the absence of pesticides and synthetic additives. Similarly, Paul

and Rana (2012) highlighted that health benefits are a significant driver for organic food consumption.

Environmental concerns also play a critical role. Organic product consumers are often motivated by the desire to support environmentally sustainable practices (Hughner et al., 2007). This eco-consciousness stems from the belief that organic farming methods are more sustainable and less harmful to the environment (Yadav & Pathak, 2016).

Ethical considerations, such as animal welfare and fair-trade practices, further influence consumer choices. Organic products are often associated with higher ethical standards, attracting consumers who prioritize ethical consumption (Harper & Makatouni, 2002).

Perceptions of Organic Products

Consumer perceptions of organic products significantly affect their purchasing decisions. Magnusson et al. (2001) found that consumers generally perceive organic foods as superior in quality, taste, and nutritional value. This positive perception is reinforced by branding and labelling, which play a crucial role in shaping consumer attitudes (Hughner et al., 2007).

However, the premium price of organic products can be a barrier. Despite recognizing the benefits, some consumers are deterred by higher costs (Aertsens et al., 2009). This price sensitivity highlights the need for effective communication strategies to justify the price premium through perceived value.

The trustworthiness of organic labels and certifications also impacts consumer perceptions. Janssen and Hamm (2012) noted that consumers are more likely to purchase organic products when they trust the certification process and the authenticity of organic labels. Transparency in the supply chain and clear labelling can enhance consumer trust and positively influence purchasing decisions.

Purchasing Behaviour

Consumer purchasing behaviour in the organic products market is influenced by a combination of motivations and perceptions. Thøgersen (2011) emphasized the importance of habitual behaviour, noting that regular organic consumers are likely to continue purchasing organic products due to established habits and positive previous experiences.

Socio-demographic factors also play a role. Studies have shown that higher-income households and individuals with higher levels of education are more likely to purchase organic products (Dettmann & Dimitri, 2010). This correlation suggests that organic product consumption is associated with greater awareness and disposable income.

Marketing strategies and point-of-sale factors significantly influence purchasing behaviour. Promotions, in-store displays, and the availability of organic products in mainstream retail outlets can enhance visibility and accessibility, thereby increasing purchase likelihood (Hughner et al., 2007).

Research Objective of the Study:

- **Preference of consumers for organic products:** The study seeks to investigate the elements influencing consumers' choice to buy organic products and comprehend their preferences in this area.
- **Growing trend towards healthier and sustainable food choices:** The study notes the expanding interest in healthier and more environmentally friendly food options as well as the rising demand for organic products.
- **Gathering information on attitudes, beliefs, and demographic factors:** The questionnaire will gather information on consumers' attitudes, beliefs, purchasing behavior, and demographic details like age, gender, education, and income.
- **Examining awareness and understanding of organic products:** The study will investigate consumers' overall awareness of organic products and their level of understanding regarding organic labeling and certification.
- **Drivers of consumer preference:** The study will examine a number of factors, such as ethical considerations, environmental awareness, and health concerns, that influence consumer choice for organic products.
- **Role of Gender in Safety Concern about the organic Products:** The study will examine the difference of opinion among male and female consumer about the safety concern of organic products.

Research Methodology:

The study uses a descriptive approach and a survey to understand what consumers like about organic products. The researchers collected data from different sources, but they mainly focused on the information they gathered directly from the participants. They used a questionnaire to collect this information. They also looked at existing information from journals, websites, and books. The researcher chose 150 participants for their study using a specific method called random sampling.

Sampling Design: Data were gathered from 150 respondents using a random sampling technique for the purpose of this study.

Sampling Size: The sample size of the research is 150 respondents.

Data Interpretation and Analysis:

This section of the research report presents an analysis of the data collected from the 150 survey respondents. It provides profiles and information about the participants who took part in the survey.

Table-1 Demographic Information of Respondents

Factors	Category	No. Of respondents	Percentage
Age	A. Under 18	18	12
	B. 18-24	126	84
	C. 25-34	6	4
	D. 35-44	-	-
	E. 45-54	-	-
	F. 55 or older	-	-
Gender	A. Male	126	84
	B. Female	24	16
Education Qualification	A. High School or Less	57	38
	B. Some College or Associate's Degree	33	22
	C. Bachelor's Degree	45	30
	D. Graduate or Professional Degree	15	10
Occupation	A. Student	-	-
	B. Homemaker	129	86
	C. Employed full-time	-	-
	D. Employed part-time	12	8
	E. Self-employed	-	-
Family Income	A. Less than Rs.2,250,000	9	6
	B. Rs. 2,50,000-5,00,000	-	-
	C. Rs.5,00,001-8,00,000	-	-
	D. Rs. 8,00,001-10,00,000	42	7
	E. Above Rs.10,00,000	27	18
		81	54

Source: Primary Data

The above table visualizes the demographics of the 150 respondents. More than 80% of the respondents are in the age group of 18-24 years and also 84% of respondents are Male, 16% of them are female. 38% of the respondents education qualification is High school level and more than 80% of respondents are students while remaining respondents are employed full-time and self-employed. As far Household income in concerned more than 50% of the respondents family income is above Rs.10,00,000.

Table-2 Frequency of Acquiring Organic Products

Category	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Never	6	4
Rarely (once every few months)	48	32
Occasionally (once a month)	36	24
Frequently (several times a month)	54	36
Always	6	4

Source: Primary Data

Table-2 shows that more than 36% of the respondents purchase organic products **frequently**, 32% of the respondents purchase **rarely**, 24% of the respondents purchase **occasionally**, 4% of the respondents **always** purchase organic products, and 4% of the respondents **never** purchased organic products.

Table-3 Importance of Organic Certification while acquiring organic products

Category	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Very Important	66	44
Somewhat Important	66	44
Not Very Important	15	10
Not at all important	3	2

Source: Primary Data

Table-3 shows that 44% of the respondents find it **Very Important** for organic certification while purchasing a organic product, 44% of the respondents find it **Somewhat Important** for organic certification while purchasing a organic product, and 10% find it **Not Very Important** for organic certification while purchasing a organic product.

Table-4 Concern for Safety of Organic Products

Category	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Very Concerned	66	44
Somewhat Concerned	61	41
Can't Say	5	3
Not Very Concerned	15	10
Not at all Concerned	3	2

Source: Primary Data

Table -4 shows how concerned are respondents towards the safety of the organic products. 44% of the respondents are **Very Concerned** about the safety of organic products, 41% of the respondents are **Somewhat Concerned** about the safety of the organic products, 10% of the respondents are **Not Very Concerned** about the safety of the organic products and 2% of the respondents are **Not at all Concerned** about the safety of the organic products. 3% respondents can't say about their concern about the product.

Table-5 Consumer Switching Behaviour from Non-Organic to Organic Products and Reasons for Switching

Category	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Yes, for health reasons	105	70
Yes, for environmental reasons	48	38
Yes, for taste reasons	27	18
Yes, for price reasons	21	14
Yes, because the non-organic product was not available	3	2
Yes, because of quality concerns	42	28
No, I have never switched	12	8
Other	3	2

Source: Primary Data

Table-5 shows respondents ever switched from purchasing a non-organic product to an organic product, if yes what was the reason. 70% of the respondents switched **for health reasons**, 38% of the respondents switch **for environmental reasons**, 18% of the respondents switch **for taste reasons**, 14% of the respondents switch **for price reasons**, also 2% of the respondents switch **because the non-organic product was not available**, 28% of the respondents switch **because of quality concerns**, and 8% of the respondents have **never switched** to organic products while purchasing.

To know the difference of opinion about the safety concern of organic product use the following hypotheses has been drawn:

Ho: There is no significant difference of opinion among male and female consumer towards the safety concern of organic product.

Ha :There is a significant difference of opinion among male and female consumer towards the safety concern of organic product.

The hypotheses have been tested using independent sample t-test to know the difference of opinion among male and female consumers about the safety concern of the organic products. SPSS-22 software has been used for analysing the data and the results are as follows:

Independent Sample t-Test

Table-6

Group Statistics					
	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Safety Concern about Organic Products	Male	126	4.31	.749	.116
	Female	24	4.38	.744	.263

Table-7

Independent Samples Test										
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Safety Concern about	Equal variances assumed	.000	.999	-.227	148	.821	-.065	.289	-.646	.515

- The government may provide subsidies and incentives to farmers who grow organic foods. Universities of agriculture should provide the essential training for farmers to teach them how to make organic insecticides.

Conclusion:

Organic products are gaining popularity in recent times due to their natural production methods and perceived health benefits. This study examines consumer perception towards organic products, with a specific focus on their health aspects. The findings indicate that consumers are not only aware of organic products but also exhibit positive purchasing behavior towards them. However, there is a lack of awareness among consumers regarding the benefits of organic products. To address this gap, the research suggests that marketers should actively promote the availability of organic products to increase the market size. Simultaneously, consumers need to be informed about the benefits of organic products. By enhancing consumer awareness and understanding, the demand for organic products can be further stimulated.

It has been also observed that the consumers are very much concern about the safety of use of Organic products irrespective of male and female consumers. Both male and female are having concern about the safety aspect of the organic product and there is no difference of their opinions about it.

The determinants of consumer choice in the organic products market are multifaceted, involving a complex interplay of motivations, perceptions, and purchasing behaviours. Health consciousness, environmental concerns, and ethical considerations drive consumer motivations, while perceptions of quality, trust in labels, and price sensitivity shape their attitudes. Purchasing behaviour is influenced by habitual consumption, socio-demographic factors, and effective marketing strategies. Understanding these determinants can help stakeholders develop targeted interventions to promote organic product consumption and support sustainable consumer behaviour.

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