

IMPACT OF HEALTH CONSCIOUSNESS ON THE CONSUMER PREFERENCE AND SATISFACTION ON ORGANIC FOOD PRODUCTS IN CHENNAI

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Abstract

Consumption of organic food is rapidly becoming one of the most prominent food trends of the 21st century. Consumers' interest for organic products is increasing every day and several industries have been witnessing a growing demand for this type of products. The focus of this study is to better understand how an individual's degree of health consciousness affects the purchase intention of organic food and how this relationship is mediated by the attitudes one holds towards organic food. A self-administered online questionnaire was used to obtain the data. The main conclusions taken from the statistical analysis are that the degree of health consciousness has a direct impact on the consumers' preference and satisfaction of organic food products

Key words: Consumers attitude, Organic food products, food trends, growing demand and health consciousness.

INTRODUCTION

Over the last ten years, the market for organic food has expanded steadily, but its overall share of the food market remains small. Organic farming not only protects the environment but also enhances public health, which has a positive impact on rural communities' social cohesion and economy. Customers' concerns about food safety, human health, and the environment have led to a rise in interest in organically produced foods among public organisations and consumers, mostly in industrialised nations. Like other developing nations, India has seen a rise in the production and trading of organic farms, which is regarded as a key tactic for promoting sustainable development. Farmers, producers, processors, traders, exporters, and consumers in India are becoming more and more interested in the growth of organic agriculture.

Organic products are produced using an agricultural method that is socially and environmentally responsible, eliminating the need for chemical pesticides and fertilisers. By maintaining the soil's ability to reproduce and regenerate itself, as well as providing healthy plant nutrition and effective soil management, this farming technique creates nutrient-dense, vibrant food that is resistant to disease.

Organic Food production in India

India's diverse agroclimatic conditions offer ample opportunity for the production of organic products in all varieties. An added benefit in a few regions of the nation is the long-standing practice of organic farming. This holds potential for the organic producers to enter the market which is increasing quickly in the domestic and export sector. India is first in terms of overall producers and eighth in the world for organic agricultural land, according to data from 2020 (Source: FIBL & IFOAM Year Book, 2020).

The National Programme for Organic Production (NPOP) is being implemented by the Government of India's APEDA, Ministry of Commerce & Industries. The program includes, among other things, requirements for organic agriculture, marketing and farming promotion, and certification body accreditation. The European Commission and Switzerland have recognised the NPOP production and accreditation requirements for unprocessed plant products as being on par with national norms. Likewise, USDA has acknowledged that NPOP accreditation conformance evaluation processes are equal to US NOP standards. These acknowledgements allow importing nations to accept Indian organic products that have been properly certified by India's recognised certifying authorities. Additionally, APEDA is working towards bilateral equivalency with countries like Japan, Taiwan, Canada, and South Korea.

As of March 31, 2020, 3.67 million hectares (2019–20) were registered under the National Programme for Organic Production and subject to the organic certification process. This comprises 1.37 million hectares for the collection of

wild harvests and 2.299 million hectares of cultivable land. In 2019–20, India produced 2.75 million metric tonnes (MT) of certified organic products, encompassing all food product categories such as oil seeds, sugar cane, pulses, cotton, cereals & millets, aromatic & medicinal plants, tea, coffee, fruits, spices, dry fruits, vegetables, and processed foods. Not only does the production encompass the edible sector, but it also yields functional food products and organic cotton fibre. Madhya Pradesh is the state that produces the most, followed by Maharashtra, Karnataka, Uttar Pradesh, and Rajasthan. Regarding commodities, the greatest category is oil seeds, which are followed by sugar crops, cereals and millets, tea and coffee, fibre crops, fodder, pulses, aromatic and medicinal plants, and spices and condiments.

In 2019–20, the total amount exported was 6.389 lakh MT. The realised value of organic food exports was around INR 4,686 crore, or 689 million USD. The USA, EU, Canada, Switzerland, Australia, Japan, Israel, UAE, New Zealand, Vietnam, and other countries are among those to which organic products are exported. Processed foods, such as soy meal (45.87%), oilseeds (13.25%), plantation crop products (such as tea and coffee, 9.61%), cereals and millets (8.19%), spices and condiments (5.20%), dry fruits (4.98%), sugar (3.91), medicinal plants (3.84%), and other products are in the lead in terms of export value realisation.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Pardeep Kumar and Hema Gulati (2017) performed research to look at how consumers in the landlocked state of Haryana perceive organic products. The study's primary goals are to ascertain how consumers react to organic products. One hundred ten respondents made up the sample that was used for the study's purpose. The study's findings demonstrate the numerous issues that agricultural respondents deal with when purchasing organic products in stores. According to a study by **Sharma (2020)**, consumers are willing to pay extra for organic food items due of their perceived health benefits, quality, and environmental sustainability. Similarly, a study by **Nafees et al., (2022)** found that consumers are more likely to purchase organic food products if they think they are safer and healthier than food produced traditionally.

Based on the SOR theoretical model and information similarity effect, **Liu C et al. (2021)** examined the relationships between consumers' similarity (i.e., information anxiety, uncertainty, and sustainable consumption attitude), perceived values (i.e., functional value, health value, and environmental value), and organic purchasing behaviour. The findings showed a strong correlation between perceived values and information anxiety, uncertainty, and a sustainable consumption mindset. Additionally, purchase behaviour was significantly positively influenced by perceived values and a sustainable consumption mindset.

Vehapi & Mitić (2021) assert that adopting an eco-friendly mindset shows concern for the environment's preservation as well as animals' welfare. Consumers who are environmentally aware, sometimes referred to as ethical consumers, support environmental other research indicates that a customer's ecological drive is a crucial element that may impact their choice to purchase organic food.

Najib et al. (2022) state that consumers purchase organic food because they believe it improves animal welfare and boosts the regional economy. Consumers that care about both their own health and safety as well as the safety and purity of the environment for future generations pick organic products.

According to **Singh & Bhatia (2023)** the key reason why consumers buy and consume organic food is for health reasons. Customers assume that organic food has a higher concentration of vitamins and nutrients because they claim organic goods are healthier than ordinary food. In addition, it's conceivable to expect that the pandemic will increase demand for nutrient-dense organic foods that are healthy for the immune system and a surge in the desire for nutrient-dense, organic, and nutritious foods that improve immunity (**Alrashdi et al. 2023**).

According to **Skalkos & Kalyva (2023)**, if there is little to no discrepancy between the predicted and actual eating quality, customers appear to adjust their evaluation of the taste of organic food to match their high standards. When used to infer sensory properties, the organic label has grown dramatically into a sensory feature rather than a credibility attribute.

Statement of the Problem

This study aims to address the following research question: What is the positive relationship between customer preference and satisfaction with organic food and health consciousness? The present investigation closes certain methodological and theoretical gaps in earlier studies on the evaluation of consumers' health consciousness with relation to organic food products.

Objectives of the Study

1. To study about the importance of organic food products
2. To find out the major factors influencing for purchase of organic food products.
3. To analyse the impact of health consciousness of consumer preference and satisfaction towards organic food products.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this research, both descriptive and analytical methods were applied. Additionally, primary and secondary data were employed to achieve the study's objective. Respondents were sent the questionnaire via a Google form in order to collect the primary data. Secondary data has been obtained from current affairs, newspapers, and various publications, as well as from a variety of online questionnaires. A proper sample strategy (convenient sampling) was used to obtain the necessary data from 155 respondents. The gathered data is analysed using a chi-square test, factor analysis and percentage analysis.

Hypothesis of the Study

➤ There is no association between monthly income of the respondents and amount spent on monthly purchase of organic food products.

Limitations of the Study

The study was limited to Chennai city of Tamil Nadu. There could only be 155 respondents in total.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Table – 1 Personal Profile of the respondents

Particulars		No. of Respondents	Percentage
Gender	Male	65	42%
	Female	90	58%
	Total	155	100%
Age	Up to 25	25	16%
	26-35	15	10%
	36-45	82	53%
	46-55	24	15%
	Above 55	9	6%
	Total	155	100%
Marital Status	Married	118	76%
	Un married	37	24%
	Total	155	100%
Education Level	School Level	15	10%
	Under Graduate	41	26%
	Post Graduate	75	48%
	Professional	19	12%
	ITI / Diploma	5	3%
	Total	155	100%
Occupation	Government employee	37	24%
	Privet employee	68	44%
	Business / Profession	19	12%
	Home Maker	21	14%
	Others	10	6%
	Total	155	100%

Monthly Income	Upto Rs. 25,000	27	17%
	Rs. 25,001-50000	60	39%
	Rs. 50,001-75000	33	21%
	Rs. 75,001-1,00,000	23	15%
	Above Rs. 1,00,000	12	8%
	Total	155	100%
Residential Area	Urban	86	55%
	Semi-Urban	54	35%
	Rural	15	10%
	Total	155	100%

The above table 1 indicates that, out of 145 respondents:

- **Gender Wise Classification:** Majority 58% of the respondents are female and 42% of the respondents are male.
- **Age Wise Classification:** Majority 53% of the respondents belongs to the age group between 36-45 years and least 6% of the respondents belongs to above 55 years age group of consumers.
- **Marital status Wise Classification:** Majority 76% of the respondents are married and least 24% of the respondents are unmarried.
- **Educational Qualification Wise Classification:** Maximum 48% of the respondents are post graduates and least 3% of the respondents are ITI/Diploma holders.
- **Occupation Wise Classification:** Maximum 44% of the respondents are Private employees and least 6% of the respondents are others like daily labour, contract labour, etc.
- **Monthly Income Wise Classification:** Maximum 39% of the respondent's monthly income are between Rs. 25,001 – 50,000 and least 8% of the respondent's monthly income are above Rs. 1,00,000.
- **Residential Area Wise Classification:** Majority 55% of the respondents are living in urban area and least 10% of the respondents are living in rural area.

Table – 2 Amounts Spent on Monthly for Purchase of Organic Food Products

Amounts Spent on Monthly	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Up to Rs. 5,000	65	42%
Rs. 5,001-7,500	38	25%
Rs. 7,501-10,000	29	19%
Rs. 10,001-12,500	15	10%
Above Rs. 12,500	8	5%
Total	155	100%

Table - 2 reveals that, 42% of the respondents are spent monthly up to Rs. 5,000 for purchase of organic food products, 25% of the respondents are spent monthly between Rs. 5,001 – Rs. 7,500, 19% of the respondents are spent monthly between Rs. 7,501 – Rs.10,000, 10% of the respondents are spent monthly between Rs. 10,001 – Rs. 12,500, and 5% of the respondents are spent monthly above Rs. 12,500. Hence the maximum 42% of the respondents are spent monthly up to Rs. 5,000 and least 5% of the respondents are spent monthly above Rs. 12,500.

Table – 3 Factors influencing to purchase of organic food products by the respondents

Factors influencing	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Health consciousness	87	56%
Product attributes	17	11%
Flavour / Taste	14	9%

Nutritional worth	28	18%
Environment's safety	9	6%
Total	155	100%

Table - 3 indicates that, 56% of the respondents are influenced by health consciousness as a major factor for purchase of organic food products, 11% of the respondents are influenced by product attributes, 9% of the respondents are influenced by flavour / taste, 18% of the respondents are influenced by nutritional worth and 6% of the respondents are influenced by environment's safety. Hence majority 56% of the respondents are influenced by health consciousness as a major factor for purchase of organic food products and least 6% of the respondents are influenced by environment's safety.

H₀: There is no association between monthly income of the respondents and amount spent on monthly purchase of organic food products.

Table - 4 Chi-Square Test on Monthly income of the respondents and amount spent on monthly purchase of organic food products

Monthly income of the respondents	Amount Spent on Monthly for Purchase of Organic Food Products					Total	Chi-Square value	P value
	Up to Rs. 5,000	Rs. 5,001-7,500	Rs. 7,501-10,000	Rs. 10,001-12,500	Above Rs. 12,500			
Up to Rs. 25,000	27	0	0	0	0	27	151.81	0.000
	(100%)	(0.00%)	(0.00%)	(0.00%)	(0.00%)			
	[41.54%]	[0.00%]	[0.00%]	[0.00%]	[0.00%]			
Rs. 25,001-50000	29	21	7	3	0	60		
	(48.33%)	(35.00%)	(11.67%)	(5.00%)	(0.00%)			
	[44.62%]	[55.26%]	[24.14%]	[20.00%]	[0.00%]			
Rs. 50,001-75000	9	14	8	2	0	33		
	(27.27%)	(42.42%)	(24.24%)	(6.06%)	(0.00%)			
	[13.85%]	[36.84%]	[27.59%]	[13.33%]	[0.00%]			
Rs. 75,001-1,00,000	0	3	14	4	2	23		
	(0.00%)	(13.04%)	(60.87%)	(17.39%)	(8.70%)			
	[0.00%]	[7.89%]	[48.28%]	[26.67%]	[25.00%]			
Above Rs. 1,00,000	0	0	0	6	6	12		
	(0.00%)	(0.00%)	(0.00%)	(50.00%)	(50.00%)			
	[0.00%]	[0.00%]	[0.00%]	[40.00%]	[75.00%]			
Total	65	38	29	15	8	155		

Note: 1. The value within () refers to Row Percentage.
 2. The value within [] refers to Column Percentage.

Since P value is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected at 5 percent level of significance. The Pearson Chi-Square value is 151.81. Hence it is observed that there is an association between monthly income of the respondents and amount spent on monthly purchase of organic food products. Based on the row and column percentage, up to Rs. 7,500 amount spent on monthly purchase of organic food products are highly associated with between Rs. 25,000 – Rs. 50,000 monthly income group of the respondents when compared to other amount spent on monthly purchase of organic food products.

Major Findings

- Majority 58% of the respondents are female and 42% of the respondents are male based on their gender.
- Majority 53% of the respondents belongs to the age group between 36-45 years and least 6% of the respondents belong to above 55 years age group of consumers.
- Majority 76% of the respondents are married and least 24% of the respondents are unmarried based on their marital status.
- Maximum 48% of the respondents are post graduates and least 3% of the respondents are ITI/Diploma holders based on their educational qualification.
- Maximum 44% of the respondents are Private employees and least 6% of the respondents are others like daily labour, contract labour, etc., based on their occupational status.
- Maximum 39% of the respondent's monthly income are between Rs. 25,001 – 50,000 and least 8% of the respondent's monthly income are above Rs. 1,00,000.
- Majority 55% of the respondents are living in urban area and least 10% of the respondents are living in rural area.
- Maximum 42% of the respondents are spent monthly up to Rs. 5,000 for purchase of organic food products and least 5% of the respondents are spent monthly above Rs. 12,500.
- Majority 56% of the respondents are influenced by health consciousness as a major factor for purchase of organic food products and least 6% of the respondents are influenced by environment's safety.
- The null hypothesis is rejected at 5 percent level of significance because the P value is less than 0.05, The Pearson Chi-Square value is 151.81. Hence it is observed that there is an association between monthly income of the respondents and amount spent on monthly purchase of organic food products. Based on the row and column percentage, up to Rs. 7,500 amount spent on monthly purchase of organic food products are highly associated with between Rs. 25,000 – Rs. 50,000 monthly income group of the respondents when compared to other amount spent on monthly purchase of organic food products.

Suggestions

- Provide more information about the nutritional advantages of organic foods, such as higher antioxidant levels and fewer harmful chemicals. This drives demand for products perceived as healthier.
- Marketers to increase trust towards organic products like Health-conscious consumers often believe organic products are free from pesticides, herbicides, and synthetic additives.
- Maintain high quality Standards in organic products with superior quality and taste, enhancing their satisfaction with organic food purchases.
- Organic farming practices are often viewed as more environmentally friendly, appealing to consumers' desire to support eco-conscious brands.
- The connection between health, fitness, and organic food promotes preferences for products that support an active, healthy lifestyle.
- Brands that emphasize the health benefits of their organic products, through clear labeling and educational content, can attract health-conscious consumers.
- Collaborating with health influencers or communities can enhance consumer trust and drive preference for organic options.
- Many consumers are willing to pay a premium for organic foods that are perceived as gourmet or artisanal, which enhances satisfaction through unique flavors and experiences.
- Ensure the availability of organic products in wide range and also available in supermarkets and online, more health-conscious consumers can easily access them, enhancing satisfaction.
- Variety and Innovation of organic product lines, including snacks, beverages, and ready-to-eat meals, caters to diverse consumer preferences and lifestyle needs.

CONCLUSION

The impact of health consciousness on consumer preferences for organic food products is profound. Brands that align their offerings with these values emphasizing quality, safety, sustainability and health benefits are likely to see increased satisfaction and loyalty from health-conscious consumers. Understanding this dynamic can help businesses tailor their strategies to meet the evolving demands of the market. On the basis of the empirical findings of this study, retailer managers in the food industry and food companies should plan and execute marketing strategies to communicate and persuade consumers to purchase more organic food. For example, retailer managers should use advertising campaigns to link organic food with environmental issues. The Governments should also build local organic markets to support this trend of organic food products.

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