

The Green Turn and Sustainable Shift: Examining Consumer Awareness and Motivation Towards Organic Food in Tiruchirappalli

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Abstract: *Organic food refers to naturally grown and processed products that completely avoid the use of chemical fertilizers, pesticides, or artificial substances. These items are also free from genetically modified ingredients, aiming to encourage a sustainable agricultural system. Public awareness of rising concern for health and the environment has resulted in a continual growth in the demand for organic food. Organic farming has long been a part of India's agricultural heritage. Long before the arrival of chemical-based farming, Indian cultivators practiced natural methods using resources from plants and animals, which preserved soil fertility and ecological balance. Farming practices based on organic principles were once the foundation of India's economy and played a vital role in its overall growth and prosperity. Although organically grown products are available today, their supply remains limited. However, rising consciousness about health and sustainability has led to a notable shift in consumer preference towards organic goods. Increasing awareness of the harmful effects of chemically processed food has led consumers to prefer more natural and organic alternatives. In recent years, the Indian organic market has grown rapidly, particularly among educated and health-conscious consumers. Retailers catering to niche segments are promoting organic items to meet this demand. The present study therefore focuses on examining consumer awareness and perceptions towards organic products in Tiruchirappalli, identifying key factors influencing their buying behaviour.*

Keywords: Sustainable agriculture, Organic farming, Organic food, Awareness, Purchasing habits

INTRODUCTION

The core of the Indian economy is agriculture; however, it faces several challenges, including low production, fragmented landholding, and the conversion of agricultural and non-agricultural land. Despite these obstacles, the industry presents numerous investment opportunities emerging from the increasing need for superior-quality products with added market value. In India, traditional practices persist, with people using natural substances like oil cakes, cow dung, and neem leaves as preservatives and pest deterrents. The use of chemical fertilisers began around the late 1850s as a means to improve agricultural productivity. Over time, however, their excessive use has been linked to several health-related and environmental issues. These growing concerns have encouraged many consumers to shift their preference towards organic products. They are widely regarded as safer and healthier alternatives for today's health-conscious individuals. They are cultivated through natural farming methods that are produced grown naturally.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Gupta, L., Kumar, V., Mahajani, K., Kumar, A., & Wadhawan, N. (2025). conducted a study in Udaipur, The findings revealed high awareness (92%) and positive perceptions driven by health benefits, environmental concerns, and quality assurance. While 86% had purchased organic products—mainly vegetables, grains, and fruits—price sensitivity and limited availability remained major barriers. Education, income, and family size positively influenced awareness and purchase behaviour, whereas occupation showed a negative relationship. The study concluded that despite strong awareness, affordability and accessibility hinder broader adoption, suggesting the need for awareness campaigns, improved supply chains, and supportive policies to enhance organic food consumption. Makwana et al. (2025), examined consumer awareness and purchasing behaviour toward organic products in Anand and Vidyanagar through a web-based survey of 300 respondents. Results showed high general awareness (92%) but low brand recognition (62% unaware of specific brands) and limited purchase behaviour, with only 24% of aware consumers buying organic products. Fruits and vegetables were the most preferred categories, while high prices, limited availability, and doubts about authenticity hindered purchases. Although 65% recognized organic certifications,

a significant portion remained uninformed, highlighting a gap between awareness and actual buying behaviour. Shukla and Khare (2024), The study revealed that though awareness is increasing, many consumers lack clarity about certifications, labeling, and differences from conventional food. people's health awareness, concern for the environment, trust in product certification, and their socio-economic background significantly shape perceptions and purchase motives. The study highlights the need for stronger consumer education, transparent marketing, and awareness programs to close knowledge gaps and promote informed, sustainable buying behaviour.

Ramesh S.V, Pavithra V, (2025), The adoption of organic farming and processing practices largely depends on market demand, which in turn is shaped by consumers' awareness and attitude towards organic food products.

Dr. U. Homiga, Dr. C. Kala, and K. Monish Kumar (2024), the study explores consumer awareness, attitudes, and behaviors towards organic products in Chennai. With 91 participants, the research highlights a strong awareness of organic products, with health benefits being a key motivator for purchasing. However, challenges such as limited availability, quality concerns, and higher costs were identified. The study also found a significant gender-based difference in knowledge, suggesting the need for targeted marketing and education. Recommendations include educational campaigns, better product availability, improved quality control, and optimized pricing strategies to overcome these barriers and capitalize on market opportunities.

Witold Kozirok, et al., (2023), The study aimed to examine and understand consumer opinions on organic foods, along with the key factors that influence their satisfaction during purchase. Though some expressed a neutral stance. Customer satisfaction was mainly influenced by the shorter shelf-life of products, their perceived health benefits, lower levels of chemical residues, and better taste. Consumers primarily purchased organic items from specialized outlets, supermarkets, discount stores, and directly from organic producers. Promotional aspects, however, were found to be the least significant factor influencing their buying decisions.

Anushka and Dr. Sunita Kumari (2022), The study from Patna district which is based on a sample of 100 participants. The research seeks to identify the key factors influencing consumer decisions to purchase organic foods, with particular attention to health concerns, food safety, and environmental sustainability.

Wahyudi David., and Ardjansyah. (2021), This study focuses on examining how young consumers in Indonesia perceive organic food. Data were collected from 253 respondents aged between 17 and 23 years. The insights from this study are expected to help sellers and retailers design more effective marketing strategies to attract and retain potential consumers of organic food.

Nenad eric, et al., (2021), made an attempt to find the attitude of the people in Croatia and Serbia about Organic farming potentials. The attitudes of survey participants from both countries toward organic food. This study employed quantitative research methods.

Gopinath (2019 b) individuals are worried about the components. They favor products made with non-toxic, organic ingredients over those made by others. This forces the producers to adopt eco-friendly practices from manufacturing to advertising to maintain their position in the market.

Manika (2019), the findings suggest that the necessary step for comparing prices and assessing quality, which is recognizing the cost of products, is achieved for the majority of items across various consumer demographics. Both consistent and sporadic buyers of organic goods.

Chalcidian (2019), Research was conducted to pinpoint the primary obstacles to purchasing and the elements that contributed to the rise in demand. The study revealed that the cost of the product was the foremost obstacle to purchasing, followed by its perishability and accessibility. Additional factors that played a role were skepticism and insufficient advertising for organic food products.

Nayana S & Dr. Ritu Singhvi (2018), studied the cotton cultivation in Madhya Pradesh and reported that 80% of farmers adopted organic practices to improve soil quality, while 36% did so for assured market access. Sharma also highlighted multiple factors affecting consumer acceptance and purchasing behavior, including cost, taste, local preference, demographics, motivation, discernment ability, and financial status. Similarly, Shukla et al. found through a questionnaire that consumers perceived organic goods as environmentally friendly and safe for health, though overall brand awareness remained moderate.

Karpagavalli, et al. (2016), The research describes the social and economic circumstances of the agricultural community, as well as the elements that encourage them to grow organic crops. It also measured the level of contentment with farming organic goods. The findings suggest that a large majority of the participants are pleased with their earnings from organic farming. A significant portion of those interviewed advice others to venture into organic agriculture. To support the farming community, the government should offer different financial resources and services. Furthermore, simplifying the export processes for Indian organic foods could enhance the country's export results.

Saranya, et al. (2015) highlighted that unlocking these untapped markets, particularly in countries like India, requires well-structured initiatives and a clear understanding of consumer preferences and purchasing behaviour. The study emphasized that analyzing consumers' awareness and knowledge about various aspects of organic products is essential for developing and strengthening organic food markets during their formative stages.

Nandi, et al. (2014) examined the places like local open markets and standard retail stores were the least favored. Furthermore, the analysis revealed that the choice of places to buy organic food was primarily affected by factors such as gender, educational background, number of family members, and income level.

Significance

The growing preference for organic food in India

is largely driven by its health benefits, absence of synthetic additives or preservatives, and its naturally derived composition. Organic products are free from artificial flavor enhancers and genetically modified ingredients, making them a safer choice for consumers. The consumption of organic food helps maintain harmony between humans and the environment. It also supports the avoidance of chemical preservatives, thereby preserving the natural quality and integrity of food. By reducing exposure to harmful substances, organic food contributes to overall well-being and sustainable living. The research investigates how much consumers know about organic food products.

Problem Statement

The intake of non-organic food has been observed to significantly affect human health and overall well-being, especially among those suffering from lifestyle and environment-related disorders. In recent times, increasing awareness about environmental protection, healthy living, and people have slowly started to realize the benefits of organic products to shape consumer behaviour. Concerns over the harmful impact caused by the continuous use of chemical fertilizers and synthetic pesticides used in conventional agriculture have encouraged many individuals to reconsider their eating habits, leading to a steady global rise in the preference. Despite this growing trend, consumer intention to buy organic products in India remains comparatively low, mainly due to inadequate awareness and limited knowledge. Therefore, the present study aims to address this gap by examining consumers’ awareness and knowledge regarding organic food items in the Tiruchirappalli district.

Objectives

1. To analyze the extent of awareness among consumers about organic food products in the Tiruchirappalli district.
2. To determine the major factors that affect consumers’ purchasing behaviour toward organic food products.
3. To evaluate consumers’ satisfaction levels in relation to the consumption of organic food products.

Scope

The universal demand for OF products has shown a steady and rapid increase in recent years. Over the past decade, the organic food sector has experienced substantial growth primarily led by heightened awareness of consumers for health benefits and environmental sustainability. Although this positive trend is projected to continue, the rate and pattern of expansion vary across nations due to differences in product diversity and production standards.

Strengthening the organic food industry requires sustained efforts to highlight its advantages and attract a wider consumer base.

Methodology

Information was gathered through surveys from participants in Tiruchirappalli District, with the research foundation being built on the basis of this primary data acquisition.

A questionnaire was designed to collect this primary information. To supplement the primary data, secondary information was obtained from scholarly articles, journals, newspapers, and online sources. The sampling method utilized for this research was convenience sampling. The total number of participants varied across different consumer categories of organic food products, with a specific group size set at 208 participants for this particular study. The information collected underwent analysis in relation to each study objective. Various analysis tools were employed during this process.

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATIONS

TABLE No:1

Level of Awareness

S.no	OFP	Respondents	%
1	Fruits	15	7.2
2	Veggies	40	19.2
3	Cereals & pulses	32	15.3
4	Hot and soft drinks	12	6
5	Oil	25	12
6	Snacks and candies	8	3.8
7	All the above	76	36.5
	cumulative	208	100

Source: Primary data

The table indicates that, 36.5 percent reported being aware of all types of organic food products. About 19.2 percent were familiar with organic vegetables, followed by 15.3 percent who knew about organic cereals and pulses. Awareness of organic oil products accounted for 12 percent, while 7.2 percent of respondents were aware of organic fruits. Additionally, 6 percent were familiar with organic beverages such as hot and soft drinks, and 3.8 percent recognized organic snacks and confectionery items. The findings suggest that a majority of respondents (36.5 %) possess awareness of all categories.

Figure 1: Awareness Level

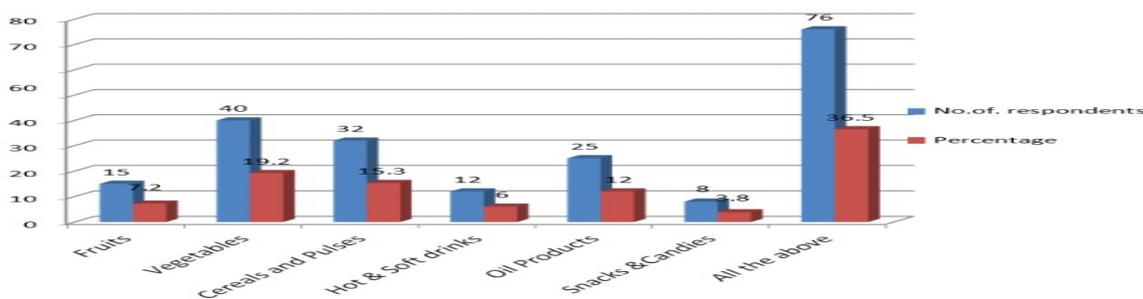


TABLE 2: Influencing Factors to Purchase OFP

Factors	I	II	III	V	Total	Rank
Eco-friendly products	38 (190)	53 (212)	78 (234)	21 (21)	693	III
Benefits	67 (335)	89 (356)	34 (102)	8 (8)	821	II
High-Nutritional value	93 (465)	72 (288)	23 (69)	3 (3)	859	I
Easy availability	13 (65)	19 (76)	25 (75)	71 (71)	447	IV
Price	13 (10)	19 (44)	25 (51)	71 (102)	359	V

Source: Primary data

The table presents the factors influencing consumers' decisions to purchase OFP. Most respondents identified the high nutritional value of organic food as the primary factor motivating their purchase, ranking it first. The health benefits associated with organic products were placed second, followed by the perception that these items are eco-friendly, which ranked third. Ease of availability was identified as the fourth influencing factor, while price was considered the least important factor, occupying the fifth rank.

TABLE 3: Education & Satisfaction level

Edu	HS	S	N	D	HD	Total
Not educated	7	12	3	1	-	23
School	10	18	2	1	-	31
Ug	16	52	9	-	1	78
Pg	9	24	6	-	1	40
Professionals	13	18	3	2	-	36
Cumulative	55	124	23	4	2	208

*Sig at 5 % level.

The chi-square test results show that the calculated value (7.96) is lower than the table value (26.29). As the computed value falls below the table value, the null hypothesis is accepted. This indicates that there is no significant association between the respondents' educational qualifications and their level of satisfaction with organic food products.

FINDINGS

The findings reveal that a majority of respondents (36.5%) are aware of all categories of OF products. Most respondents indicated that the foremost factor influencing their decision to purchase organic food products is their high nutritional value, which ranks first. The health benefits of organic food were placed second, followed by their eco-friendly characteristics, which hold the third rank. Ease of availability was identified as the fourth influencing factor, while price was considered the least significant, occupying the fifth rank.

The chi-square test results show that the calculated value (7.96) is lower than the table value (26.29). Indicating that there is no significant relationship between the respondents' educational qualifications and their level of satisfaction with OF products.

SUGGESTIONS

Consumers should be educated about the availability and advantages of organic food products through well-designed awareness programs, workshops, and educational initiatives

that highlight their health and environmental benefits.

The pricing should be made more competitive to ensure affordability and accessibility for a broader consumer segment, thereby promoting wider acceptance and regular consumption.

The government should formulate and implement suitable policies, financial incentives, and subsidy programs to encourage farmers to adopt organic cultivation methods and enhance the overall production in the country.

CONCLUSION

The study has given the researchers insight into Tiruchirappalli District consumers' awareness. The study provided valuable insights into the public's awareness of organic food. When purchasing any food product, not just organic food, consumer attitude and perception are crucial factors. It is necessary to change the fact that a lot of people have even forgotten to use OF products. The food industry in India is poised to take center stage, but in order to guarantee a balanced expansion of supply and demand in the local market, a clear national strategy must be developed immediately. To keep up with the shifting purchasing habits of different customers for organic food products, organic food marketers must be creative and adaptable.

SCOPE FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

A comparison study can be carried out to understand the adoption of OF products in a particular district or state in light of the experiences of other places. Another line of investigation is the examination of the political, social, and, above all, economic obstacles that impede producers, marketers, and consumers in a particular state from launching and adopting organic food products. A comparison of organic and conventional food products can be done to gain insight into consumer behavior patterns, as well as the diffusion rate and penetration share of these two product categories in the Indian context.

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