

A study on organic farming and consumer preference towards organic food products

Vittal Hugar, Dr. Shivappa

Research Scholar Kousali Institute of Management Studies Karnatak University Dharwad – 580003
Professor and Research Guide Kousali Institute of Management Studies Karnatak University Dharwad – 580003

Submitted: 10-09-2021

Revised: 19-09-2021

Accepted: 23-09-2021

ABSTRACT:

The environment has been a major topic for societies, governments, and commercial groups in recent years. Its importance stems from rising environmental deterioration, such as solid waste, ozone depletion, global warming, and air pollution. Organic foods are those that are grown without the use of modern synthetic inputs such as synthetic pesticides and chemical fertilisers. Irradiation, industrial solvents, or chemical food additives are not used in the processing of organic foods. The growing interest in organic products among customers is one manifestation of the continuously developing trend of sustainable consumption. The purpose of this study was to determine consumer behaviour in the organic products market and to establish a link between environmental consciousness and readiness to buy organic products. Many consumers' attitudes have shifted as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. They are becoming increasingly conscious of the dangers of failing to care for the environment. There was an increase in communal environmental awareness and sustainability prior to the pandemic, but COVID-19 has accelerated this process and pushed more individuals to take on this obligation. As a result of the health crisis, organic foods, which are foods produced using environmentally friendly agricultural methods and have not been artificially altered, may become more popular. It is critical for retailers to understand how organic food consumers act in order to adjust their strategy. In this context, the goal of this study is to look into the relationship between organic product attitudes, satisfaction, trust, purchase, and word-of-mouth (WOM) intents. The organic market has been rising for the past decade. Many people realised the significance and necessity of grasping organic products. Organic products are created by using natural fertilisers. Organic food has become increasingly popular among consumers due to

health and environmental concerns, as well as features such as nutritional content, taste, and freshness. The purpose of this study is to investigate the factors that influence customers' decisions to purchase organic products. Consumer preferences for organic foods are influenced by food safety, human health, and environmental concerns, as well as sensory attributes such as nutritive value, taste, freshness, and appearance. Although demographic variables may help to define organic consumers, the correlation isn't very strong. Organic food is also associated with natural processes, environmental and animal welfare, and the absence of pesticides and fertilizers, according to consumers. Organic food consumption continues to be stifled by high prices. Understanding the factors that contribute to rising levels of organic food consumption, such as motivation, is critical to determining whether organic food has the potential to become a true mainstream market.

Keywords: Organic foods, sustainable consumption, consumer preferences, mainstream market

I. INTRODUCTION:

In the recent decade, there has been a significant growth in demand for organic products (Du et al. 2017). Organic items are ones that are manufactured with natural ingredients and do not contain fertilizers or synthetic chemicals. To be deemed organic, a product must have been produced in a manner that respects the soil, conserves its nutrients, avoids the use of chemical products, and has been certified according to ecological standards. By avoiding prolonged contact to chemical products, it preserves not only the health of the consumers, but also the health of the farmers and workers involved in its production. Furthermore, organic farmers strive to secure the long-term usage of resources, demonstrating concern for future generations. Both

the consumer and the environment benefit from organic products. Organic products' greater quality, the absence of potentially dangerous chemicals, and the lack of synthetic additives are all elements that consumers consider to be positive. In addition to conserving the water and soil, avoiding dangerous chemical compounds in the product's manufacture decreases the harm to animal and plant species. Organic products necessitate additional labour in their production, resulting in job opportunities. As a result, they improve the environment by contributing to ecosystem conservation and more sustainable rural development.

Organic farming is regarded one of India's oldest agricultural practises. In the last few decades, India's organic agricultural market has exploded, adding significantly to the country's export business. The term "organic" refers to the method through which certain foods are made. Organic food refers to food that has been grown without the use of synthetic chemicals, hormones, antibiotics, or genetically modified organisms (GMO). A food product must be free of artificial food additives in order to be labelled as organic. Artificial sweeteners, preservatives, coloring, flavoring, and Monosodium Glutamate are all examples (MSG). Organic foods are manufactured entirely of natural ingredients, with no artificial chemicals, fertilizers, pesticides, or other additives. It does not mean that no pesticides are used; nevertheless, any pesticides used must be regulated and non-synthetic. To boost plant development, organically farmed crops typically employ natural fertilizers such as manure. Organic foods do not contain any pollutants that are harmful to the environment.

Few restaurant owners have started selling organic food to survive in the market as Indian consumers have become more health-conscious. Organic food franchise in India can be a successful business proposition for aspirants who wish to start a business in the Food & Beverage industry, as evidenced by rising preferences. The current market for organic foods in India is valued at Rs 2,500 crores, with ASSOCHAM projecting a growth rate of Rs 6,000 crores in 2015. Even so, India will have 1% of the world market, indicating the enormous potential of India's emerging organic sector. People choose organic food for a variety of reasons, including that it is healthier and that it is farmed without pesticides or fungicides. These organic items are also farmed on ground that is free of chemical residues, and organic animals are not given antibiotics or hormones. Chemicals are extremely unlikely to be found in organic products. Consumers today choose to purchase

products that do not contain current synthetic inputs and will benefit them in the long run. That is why the number of organic product stores is increasing all the time. Also, individuals must consider the potential health benefits and financial costs of eating organic vs. non-organic foods. Fruits, vegetables, grains, dairy products, eggs, and, to a lesser extent, meats and fowl are all organic foods. Foods farmed without the use of synthetic fertilisers, sewage sludge, irradiation, genetic engineering, pesticides, or pharmaceuticals are classified as organic. Pesticides are chemical or biological agents that are used to kill insects, weeds, and fungal pests that cause crop damage. These have been linked to a variety of ailments, including cancer, when consumed in sufficient quantities. Organically farmed goods, on the other hand, do not always mean oxin-free. Plants contain natural toxins that can contaminate organic products, as well as the allowed use of natural insecticides like sulphur and copper, which can be found on organically farmed foods. When it comes to animals, organically raised animals are those that are fed organic feed and are not given growth hormones or antibiotics. They are also often treated more compassionately and given more space to wander than their non-organic counterparts.

Review on consumer perceptions towards organic food:

Market & Opinion Research International Limited (MORI), 2003, states that sustainable products are always perceived as the more expensive option. Being environmentally conscious is seen as a privilege reserved for the upper crust. Consumers prefer to have an option between sustainable and non-sustainable products rather than having to choose between the two. Consumers evaluate products and make decisions based on a combination of product qualities and consequences. They rely on their sense of involvement, which is shaped by their past experiences. The priority given to each attribute is determined by the priorities and values of the consumers. Personal relevance, importance, and interest develop through time, resulting in a motivating mood (Shroeder, 2003).

Scope and Importance of the study related to organic food products:

With increased concerns about food safety and health, many customers are turning to organic products. The rise in consumer interest in organic food has been attributed to a growing need for food free of pesticides and chemical residues, among

other factors. Organic food helps to maintain a healthy balance between ourselves, other living species, and nature. It also encourages the use of no artificial preservatives and the preservation of food's authenticity. This avoids the overuse of dangerous compounds and so ensures health. The goal of this study was to learn more about customer attitudes about organic food product use and determine if there was any chance of changing their habits. The study's argument is that environmental consideration can only come from well-informed citizens who are fully aware of and devoted to their rights to good health and the environment. However, before changing any behaviour, it is vital to assess the current level of customer awareness and knowledge. As a result, the main focus of this study will be on consumers' attitudes, perceptions of organic food products, willingness to pay for organic food goods, and desire to purchase organic food.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

Sharma. N. and Dr Singhvi. R. (2018) is to better understand consumer behaviour and decision-making when it comes to organically cultivated products. And it was discovered that the most important elements influencing customers' attitudes and preferences toward organic food items were health, safety, taste, and environmental concerns. This study presents crucial evidence showing there will be an increase in demand for organically grown food products in the near future, thus producers, traders, consumers, and the government must concentrate on this niche market.

Krishnakumare. B. and Niranjan. S. (2017) customer behaviour plays a significant impact in the organic food sector. The primary driver of organic food consumption is a concern for one's health. Even though organic food items are believed to be healthy, customers lack trust in their originality, which is one of the reasons why they do not purchase organic food products, according to this study. It was also discovered that psychological elements such as perception, attitude, and purchasing intention had a significant impact on organic food customers' decision to buy organic food items.

Ghai. S and Ramawat. N. (2016) intends to examine the many aspects influencing consumer knowledge and purchasing perceptions of organic tea. This research examines the demand for Organic Tulsi Tea in metropolitan locations such as Delhi-NCR, where residents are more concerned about their health and lifestyle, and the majorities are working professionals. Consumers in major cities

have the purchasing power to pay a premium for organic foods.

Padmathy. J. and Saraswathy. R. (2016) opines that Consumers prefer organic food for their healthy lifestyle and their research study shows that they are aware of the benefits of organic foods. Consumers are interested about green products, which open up potential for green marketing and the environment. The findings show a favourable correlation between the variables or factors that influence customers' purchasing decisions for green products.

Dr Chandrasekhar. H. M. (2014) in their research article discuss on organic food marketers must be innovative and dynamic in order to compete with changing consumer purchase behaviour in the organic food product industry. People are aware of organic food, but they are not loyal to it, according to the research. Organic food products are popular among consumers. Knowledge and knowledge of organic food items may influence attitudes and perceptions, ultimately leading to a purchasing choice. Organic fruits and vegetables, rather than groceries, have a positive reputation among consumers. Consumer preference is influenced by the quality of organic food products, nutritional values, flavour, and freshness.

Mehra. S. and Ratna. P. A. (2014) in their research article stress that women and younger customers have a favourable attitude toward organic food and when choosing healthful food, they pay close attention to acquiring product information and comparing labels. Food that tastes good and is nutritious is preferred by consumers, and they are willing to pay a premium price for it. The majority of the customers are from the middle class, and they have a favourable attitude about organic food.

Shafie. F. A. and Rennie. D. (2009) in their research article say that Food safety, human health, environmental concern, and specific features such as nutritional value, flavour, freshness, and appearance all impact customer choice for organic food goods. Further they assert that Age, wealth, education, and other socioeconomic factors all play a role in organic food consumption. This article looks into consumer concerns regarding food safety as a result of health, agricultural, and environmental changes linked to modern food production, such as genetically modified organisms and pesticide misuse. This article also examines the various consumer attitudes toward organic food, including their willingness to pay a premium for organic food consumption.

Statement of the problem:

When opposed to non-organic food that has been prepared with artificial preservatives and chemicals, natural organic food has numerous advantages. Using these foods in everyday meals can provide significant health benefits because they are fully natural and free of pesticides and other toxins. Environmental awareness, rising consumer interest in organic products, and a willingness to pay a premium for organic features sparked business interest in organic marketing, resulting in significant improvements and developments. Because of the lucrative export potential offered to producers, India has developed a market for organic food items. In India, the majority of organic produce is farmed for export to the worldwide market. The remainder is distributed to pre-determined retail shops. So, if the demand for organic products is increasing among producers, the benefits must inevitably reach the country's local populace.

Scope of the study:

The goal of this study is to learn more about consumer satisfaction with organic food products. Many customers have turned to organic food products as their concerns about health and food safety have grown. The rise in consumer interest in organic food has been attributed to a growing need for food free of pesticides and chemical residues, among other factors. Organic food helps to maintain a healthy balance between ourselves, other living species, and nature. It also encourages the use of no artificial preservatives and the preservation of food's authenticity. This avoids the overuse of dangerous compounds and thereby promotes good health.

Objectives of the present study:

1. To study consumer's willingness to pay for organic food
2. To know consumer perception of organic food quality
3. To study the major advantages of Natural organic foods
4. To understand the role of research related to consumer behaviour towards organic food products

Consumers' willingness to pay for organic food

When comparing the price of organic food to the price of conventional food, a price premium is applied. Many promises about the healthiness of organic food are made in order to explain the

higher price that consumers must pay (Fillion and Arazi, 2002).

The most prominent sales reason used to justify the price premium for organic goods, according to Hamm et al (2002), was food safety, followed by nature conservation and taste. Some customers just believe that organic food is out of their price range, while others believe that the market overcharges for healthier foods (Whitehead and Nicholson, 2001). Organic labelling education and awareness is unquestionably one approach to increase the likelihood that a consumer will be willing to pay a premium for organic goods (Batte et al, 2007). In Spain, a consumer poll on consumer willingness to pay for organic products revealed the need for organic food prices to be adjusted. Consumers are willing to pay prices that are similar to those that are now in effect (Sanjuan et al, 2003). The "likely" and "organic" consumer sectors have a higher readiness to pay. Similar percentages were found for vegetables and fruit, with 17 percent and 15 percent for potatoes, respectively. The willingness to spend for veggies is slightly lower (20-22 percent) among "unlikely consumers," but it is much lower for potatoes (8-10 percent).

Organic products appear to be more easily identifiable in perishable products such as fruit and vegetables, resulting in higher premiums being provided. Organic fruit and vegetables are often linked with a better diet in the United Kingdom, despite the fact that organic fruit and vegetables cultivated in the United Kingdom are rather rare (Gil et al, 2000). Consumers continue to face a price barrier when purchasing organic food. Even between nearby countries, there is a significant price premium difference, indicating that organic market transparency is extremely inadequate (Hamm et al, 2002). When a conventional food product's farm-gate price is low, such as cereal, the organic price premium for cereal is equally low. The price premium is usually lower in nations where general food suppliers, such as major supermarkets, actively market organic products. One likely factor is decreased distribution costs, as organic and conventional foods can be delivered together. The rising organic market must be recognised using market data spanning several years in order to forecast market growth and identify a solution to close the price gap between organic and conventional foods. To promote consumption, prices of conventional and organic foods should be cut (Gil et al, 2000).

Organic food purchasers are older, come from tertiary-educated families, and have a greater income than non-organic food purchasers (Padel

and Foster, 2005; Roitner-Schobesberger et al, 2008).As a result, it's been proposed that desire to pay for organic food rises with age and income.On the other hand, Lockie et al (2004) discovered that age and income have relatively little impact on the degree of organic intake.Consumer socioeconomic qualities are not as important as lifestyles and attitudes toward environmental issues, according to Gil et al (2000).A consumer survey in Norway discovered no significant effect of income or occupation on the desire to eat organic food (Wandel and Bugge, 1996).On average, Canadian customers are ready to pay a price premium of at least 24%. (Yiridoe et al, 2005).According to a Spanish consumer study, customers were willing to spend a greater price for meat, fruits, and vegetables, indicating that perishable products were more important to them than organic features.In the case of beef, the rationale could be partly due to recent food and health difficulties in Europe (BSE, E.coli 0157 infection) (Gil et al, 2001).According to Roitner-Schobesberger et al. (2008), 60 percent of organic consumers do not consider price to be a limiting issue, whereas just 29% of non-consumers cite it as a reason for not buying organic food.

Consumer perception of organic food quality

In their meal selection, it is clear that most consumers prioritised traditional quality characteristics such as freshness and taste (Torjusen et al, 2001; Dimara et al, 2003).Freshness is the most crucial criterion to seek for in fruits and vegetables, for example.If organic fruits and vegetables match the condition, Thai consumers are more likely to buy those (Roitner-Schobesberger et al, 2008).Quality, on the other hand, is a broad term that encompasses a wide range of characteristics including sensory attributes (appearance, texture, taste, and scent), nutritional values, safety determinants, chemical constituents, mechanical properties, functional properties, and faults (Abbott, 1999; Mizrach, 2007).Consumers' understanding of unseen attributes such as microbiological and toxicological safety, as well as nutritional value, becomes more important in choosing their choice (Thierman, 2000).Taste will continue to be a major factor in consumer food selection, particularly after the item has been consumed (Fillion and Arazi, 2002).Despite the fact that sensory tests of whether organic food tastes better than conventional food have shown mixed results (McEahern and McClean, 2002), many purchasers believe organic food tastes better (Roitner-Schobesberger et al, 2008).It was proposed that rather than making a

broad claim on a specific product, it is required to treat each product category separately.

More than 150 comparative studies on cereals, potatoes, vegetables, fruit, wine, beer, bread, milk, eggs, and food products generated from them were investigated by Woese et al (1997).The investigations looked at pesticide residue levels and environmental pollutants, as well as sensory testing and animal feeding procedures.It was discovered that conventionally fertilized foods have a higher nitrate level than organically fertilized vegetables and potatoes.Pesticide residue levels were found to be lower in organically grown vegetables and fruit.Aside from the quality aspects that may be determined through experience, health and process-related quality is a matter of reliable data.The health benefits of organic food must be communicated in a way that consumers believe is trustworthy.A study on the dry matter content of leafy greens from organic and conventional foods, for example, was conducted.Excessive fertilization of standard vegetables is thought to have spurred rapid growth, which enhances crop yield by increasing water content (Soil Association, 2000).This type of information should be more effectively provided and compared on a fresh weight basis to avoid consumer confusion and misinformation.

Advantages of Natural organic foods

1. **Safer:** Natural organic foods are safer since they are grown without the chemical pesticides and additives found in conventional foods.Natural food advocates argue that this makes organic foods safer, which the general public believes.The assumption that organically farmed foods represent fewer health concerns persists, despite the fact that this has not been established specifically.
2. **Better Taste:**Organic apples were shown to be sweeter, with superior texture and firmness, than conventionally cultivated apples in a 2001 research at Washington State University.These kinds of studies have fueled the belief that organic foods are not only healthier, but also taste better than standard foods.
3. **Environment friendly:**Organic farms, on the other hand, have been demonstrated to use less energy and generate less trash than conventional farms.Natural farming also avoids the use of synthetic pesticides, which can be harmful to the environment and wildlife.
4. **Farmer friendly:**Farmers that harvest crops the traditional way typically employ pesticides, which have been linked to a variety of health

issues ranging from headaches to cancer in studies. This is not a scientific truth, but it is cited as a justification for purchasing organic and natural foods.

Role of research related to consumer behaviour towards organic food products

Consumer behaviour knowledge in the organic food market is cumulative, and its development necessitates accounting for various research viewpoints, which warrants ongoing research on this topic. The constant dynamism of persons, rather than their being static, is thus the justification for the value of research in this domain. Given the only sporadic acknowledgement of consumers' market behaviour toward organic products, the available knowledge should be further examined, particularly in light of the constant development of consumer behaviour and environmental consciousness as a result of civilization changes. From a scientific standpoint, the study of market consumer behaviours and environmental awareness allows for the verification of numerous, often complicated economic, psychoeconomic, cultural, and sociopsychological hypotheses. They assist managers in better understanding and forecasting the demand for organic products, making it easier for them to build effective plans. Foods companies can use the knowledge they've gained to create efficient marketing strategies for target audiences and, as a result, expand their business. The findings of the study could serve as motivation for the food industry to boost the availability of organic products on the market. This knowledge is also required by governmental and nongovernmental organisations whose goal is to instill specific attitudes and behaviours in consumers toward organic products and the environment, as well as to strengthen the food sector's products in general and, as a result, to promote sustainable development. The ability to develop organic products has become a must for any food-related firm, and a positive consumer rating is critical for organic items to succeed on the market. The knowledge gained can thus be applied to the implementation of postulates of a new pragmatism in economics, according to which economics can and should co-shape the world's economic destiny based on the principles of moderation and triple balance in economic, social, and ecological terms. In order to govern the actual economy's development, it is vital to investigate consumer environmental consciousness. New knowledge regarding the factors of consumer environmental awareness, as proposed by R. Thaler and C.

Sunstein, can be utilised to rationalise market players' conduct and build a better society. The knowledge gathered could aid in the implementation of a new development paradigm based on integration, sustainability, and durability.

III. CONCLUSION:

In the organic food goods category, consumer behaviour is extremely important. Organic food marketers must be imaginative and dynamic in order to keep up with changing consumer behaviour in the organic food products industry among city dwellers. For a long time, the relevance of organic food items was overlooked. As a result of environmental sustainability, organic food items are becoming more important than conventional farming. The survey revealed that while consumers were aware of imagery and availability, they were not totally faithful to organic food products. Organic food products drew the respondent's attention without a doubt. To be effective in marketing organic food items, marketers must make promotions that are both realistic and moral, as well as product availability in terms of volume and diversity. Consumer behaviour is important when purchasing any product, not only organic products. So the supply of organic shops and products is limited, but demand is growing, so farmers and the government are considering ways to improve or increase production of organic products, as well as good packaging, quality, and market systems, to help farmers improve their standard of living while also being healthy for the environment. The demand for organic products is skyrocketing. Organic food marketers must be imaginative and dynamic in order to keep up with the changing purchasing habits of urban inhabitants in the organic food market.

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