

Organic Food Products – A Study on Perception of Women Consumers

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ABSTRACT

The demand for organic food has been rapidly increasing worldwide, because of an improvement in the awareness of environmental problems and health concerns. Although the demand for organic food is increasing, the popularity of organic food is not widespread and the perception of organic food varies in the wide public. This study aimed to understand rural areas consumers' perception of organic food and the importance of organic certification in customer's decisions for obtaining insights into their consumption of organic food. Data were collected through a questionnaire survey. However, for the present study, the researcher selected retail shops from various stores such as small shop and department store in rural areas. The more consumers are interested in trust and are confident with the claimed benefits, the more likely will they purchase organic food. In addition, organic labels and certification turned out to be important for the consumers when shopping organic food. This research was the first study to investigate the consumers perception of organic food in a rural area. It is also observed that health, nutrition, taste, and chemical/fertilizer free nature are the attributes that have an influence on the purchase decision of organic food products by rural consumers. "Health benefits" were the first and primary reason for purchasing organic food, while "high price" was the key deterrent to purchasing organic food.

Keywords: Certification standards, Consumers perceptions, Organic meat, Pricing
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INTRODUCTION

Organic food market is in new stage has experienced immediately fast growth in the past few years. The industrial and technological advances food products with used to kill pests and chemicals are the major portion of everyone act of eating pattern of human life. India is the second largest country in the world on the basis of population and a major part of the population is depended on agricultural activities. Nowadays, there is an increasing trend seen toward organic agriculture. Organic products are grown under a system of agriculture without the use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides with an environmentally and socially responsible approach. Organic agriculture is not a new concept in India. At the beginning of the 19th century, Sir Albert Howard, one of the most important pioneers of organic farming worked in India for many years studying soil-plant interactions and developing composting method. In doing so, he capitalized substantially on India's highly sophisticated traditional agriculture systems, which had long applied many of the principal of organic farming (Kumar and Gulati, 2017).

The market for organic food products in India has been growing at a rapid pace over the past few years. Rising health consciousness among middle-class consumers in major cities across India has been the key factor contributing to growth in the market. Unlike conventional food, which involves the use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides, organic food products are manufactured using natural products. As a result, organic food products are free from chemical residues and are healthier compared to conventional food products. Organic food products include diverse food categories ranging from fruits and vegetables, dairy products, processed foods, pulses, and food grains to other products such as beverages and confectionaries. Implementation of various standards to improve the quality of organic food produced in the country is expected to propel growth in India's organic food market over the next 5 years. At present, India organic

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food market is dominated by organic pulses and food grains, followed by organic processed food, organic fruits and vegetables, and organic dairy products.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Availability of organic input and output is critical for improve of organic forming in the country. Development of efficient marketing system is the need of the hour for strengthening the organic production in India. This paper made a humble attempt to understanding the consumer perception about organic product in Dharmapuri. The results concluded that most of the consumer, especially in rural people, prefer organic food product. The major reasons are organic producer are low, adequate market facility is not there, few number of shops, lack of awareness, and so on. Therefore, if farmer as well as government give interest to organic farming easily enhancing good marketing system in Dharmapuri (Kumar, 2017). The green concept and the developing of organic food are still in the infant stage in Malaysia. Therefore, there is a need to gain knowledge about the consumer's behavior toward organic food

products. Specifically, this study attempts to examine consumer's perception, purchase intentions, and actual purchase behavior and the interrelationship between them in the context of organic food products.^[1] Based on the Theory of Planned Behavior, the five steps of consumer decision-making process and previous researches on organic foods, 18 items of four dimensions were constructed to measure the consumer's perception toward organic food, 6 items were used to measure their purchase intention, and six items were engaged to determine the actual purchase behavior of consumers. Data were collected in supermarkets and surrounding areas in the district of Kluang, Johor, Malaysia. A total of 300 completed questionnaires were gathered, representing 96% response rate, using convenient sampling method. The result indicated that intention to purchase organic food was significantly influenced by the consumer's perception of safety, health, environmental factors, and animal welfare of the products. Surprisingly, there was no significant effect of consumers' perceived quality of organic food products on their intention to purchase the products.^[2] Actual purchase behavior of organic food products was significantly affected by the purchase intention of the products. Significant means differences were observed in the purchase intention of organic food products according to the respondents' gender, age, income level, education level, and residence area. Theoretically, this study supported the view of consumers' perception toward organic food products will influence their behavioral intention and then lead to the actual purchase of the products. The findings proposed useful information to organic marketers to help them develop effective marketing strategies to convince organic-concerned segment to purchase the organic food products and to enhance the pro-environmental purchasing behavior in Malaysia (Ariff *et al.*, 2014). Consumer, nowadays, is more concern about food safety. Policymakers at the same time putting more attention toward the concern and changing in the consumer behavior. Such awareness has influenced the pattern of food purchasing (Buzby, 2001). That aspect has been the expansion of demand for organically grown food and is rapidly gaining ground in many parts of the world (Willer and Yussefi, 2004). Recently, there have been significant changes in the attitude of consumers toward food safety, environmental concern, and also organic food products. Organic agriculture not only preserves the environment but also has less harmful substances and improves health, bringing significant benefits.^[3] The interest of consumers and public institutions in organically produced foods has increased globally (Basha and Mason, 2015). This research aimed to evaluate the current status of consumers' buying behavior toward organic foods in the emerging market. Based on extensive literature review, the authors identified several factors that influence consumers' buying behavior toward organic food which included (1) knowledge, (2) health consciousness, (3) environmental concern, (4) price, (5) perceived beliefs and attitudes, (6) government support and policy, as well as (7) availability. A questionnaire was designed and distributed to around 105 respondents randomly in Penang. SPSS software with version 21.0 had been used to analyze the data collected. The study found that government support and policy, perceived beliefs and attitudes, knowledge, and availability have a significant positive relationship with consumer behavior toward organic foods. However, health consciousness, environmental concern, and price do not have any significant relationship with consumer behavior toward organic foods. The research is based on data collected from the second largest city (Penang) of Malaysia. Future research can use the same research model to compare

between different emerging markets. It is expected that the result obtained from this research could be used to create opportunities for the manufacturers as well as marketers of organic foods in the emerging market. There is dearth of research in this particular area based on primary data. The finding shows the behavior of consumers toward organic food in the emerging market (Hossain, 2016). Food consumption practice is changing worldwide among the consumers and now they want to opt food which is free from synthetic chemicals, fertilizers, and pesticides, that is, they want to consume for organic food which is not only sustainable for health but also environment friendly.^[4] Organic products are not so much popular among consumers because of lower productivity of organic produce by farmers, which in result lead to the high market price of organic food. There is a need to create awareness about the advantages of organic food products among people and promote its use whereas, on the other hand, there is the foremost need to motivate the farmers to opt for organic farming. A study on consumer perception regarding organic food may add insight into emerging organic food industry in India and worldwide. The review of related literature in the area of the organic food market and consumer perception studied has provided many insights for the study. It has also provided direction in designing the present study. A number of researchers have identified the demand of organic food products worldwide and in India. Further, the various factors that influence consumer perception of organic food products have also been identified.^[5] Some studies have also been undertaken preference, knowledge, and satisfaction regarding organic food products. Having reviewed several studies and having identified the gap, the investigator felt a foremost need to undertake the present investigation (Sharma and Singhvi, 2018). Consumer interests toward the organic products are increasing in line with the increase in the variety of supplies despite the recent economic crisis.^[6] Organic food consumption is greatest in the developed countries such as the USA and Europe, however, a rising trend is observed all over the world. This qualitative study aims to investigate the tendency of Turkish organic food consumers by means of face-to-face interviews with participants in organic bazaars. About 56% of respondents are females, whereas 44% of them are male and they are aged between 16 and 80. Our study reveals that health and the environmental awareness are the main factors on consumer's decision to purchase organic food. The results of our research also indicate that organic food consumers may follow a trend, in which initial perceptions are augmented overtime by food security, future of nature, environmental ethics, and sustainability of health.^[7] Food safety, which can be perceived as non-use of chemicals and synthetics, is the foremost consideration for Turkish organic consumers on food consumption decisions. The information gathered in this study can contribute to the development of scales for measuring consumer food preferences and the desire of staying healthy (Cavdar and Aydin, 2015).

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In India, organic food market is in emerging stage which has experienced steadfast growth in the past few years. The current growth in the organic market is driven by health factor and safe consumption. Day to day the environmental concern is increasing, consumers are focusing on the green aspect of the products as well as their impact on the environment. Health issues are becoming consumer's priorities to purchase the products. These are the main driving force while purchasing the organic products.^[8,9] Thus, this research study has been undertaken and to focus the consumer

perception toward organic products. The study is conducted to know the problem faced using organic products which has chemical fertilizers. The organic food products today the world requires new discussion and innovation which are leads to the potential buyers' usage of harmful to the consumers have got awareness on organic products.^[10] However, consumer perception of organic farming may be related to the availability of organic products in a specific area. Growth in the popularity of organic products may be correlated with more positive perception of organics and greater intentions to buy them.^[11,12]

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study were as follows:

1. To examine the customer perception toward organic products in Dharmapuri.
2. To analyze the rural market for organic products in Dharmapuri
3. To examine the level of awareness toward organic products in Dharmapuri.

METHODOLOGY

The researcher used descriptive type of research. Descriptive research includes surveys and fact finding inquires of different kind. In this study, the research is analyzing the consumer's perception toward organic food products in Dharmapuri district. Hence, the descriptive is selected for this study. The organic food stores, particularly in and around Dharmapuri, are taken for the study which are the sampling units. A list containing all such sampling units is considered to be the sampling framework. Considering the consumers attitude toward organic food products, the stores were selected randomly covering all the geographically locations. However, for the present study, the researcher selected retail shops from various stores such as small shop and department stores. The researcher used convenience sampling method taking of the consumers from each zone. The researcher used primary and secondary data to collect the details from the respondents. Primary data are collected from 300 sample respondents with the help of well-structured questionnaire, which is pre-tested. The primary data are supplemented by spat of secondary sources of data. The secondary sources being the published research and general articles collected from various journals, books and internet, etc. For analyzing the data, the researcher transformed the data into Master Table and calculations were done using SPSS-16 and presented the simple arithmetic tools like percentage analysis and to measure the probability between two variables Chi-square test was applied.

ANALYSIS OF ORGANIC FOOD

Every individual spending pattern mainly based on their income. The cross tabulation between income and opinion of the consumer depicted in the Table 1.

To find out the consumer preferences of the organic food products, it is further classified as food products, fruits and vegetables, cereals and pulses and milk. As per the results the cross tabulation between income and consumer preference of organic food product given in Table 2.

The consumer prefer to buy the organic food products from departmental stores, grocery stores, medical stores and many convenient shops. The cross tabulation of organic malted food products and the opinion of the consumer presented in the Table 3.

Null Hypothesis

There is no relationship between income and specific package of the field.

To find the relationship between income and specific package of the field of respondents, a Chi-square test was based and result of the test is shown in the following Table 1.1.

It is noted from Table 1.1 the calculated value less than the table value. Since the null hypothesis accepted from the Chi-square test, it is clear that there is relationship between the income and specific package.

Null Hypothesis

There is relationship between income and brand using of the field.

To find the relationship between income and brand using of the field of respondents, a Chi-square test was based and result of the test is shown in the following Table 2.1.

It is noted from Table 2.1 the calculated value less than the table value. Since the null hypothesis accepted from the Chi-square test, it is clear that there is relationship between the income and brand using.

Null Hypothesis

There is relationship between brand using and buy malted food product.

To find the relationship between brand using and buy malted food product of the respondents, a Chi-square test was based and result of the test is shown in the following Table 3.1.

It is noted from Table 3.1 the calculated value less than the table value. Since the null hypothesis rejected from the Chi-square test, it is clear that there is relationship between the brand using and buy malted food product.

Table 1: Income and Opinion of the Respondents

Income	Convenient	Fast moving	Economy	Easy to handle	Total
Rs. 10,000–20,000	63	9	39	9	120
Rs. 20,000–40,000	36	21	30	33	120
Rs. 40,001–60,000	12	18	0	0	30
60,001 and above	12	6	6	6	30
Total	123	54	75	48	300

Table 1.1: chi-square test on Age and designation

Factors	Calculated value	Degree of freedom	Table value	Result
Age and designation	14.91	9	15.84	Significant

Table 2: Income and organic food product of the Respondents

Income	Food products	Fruits and vegetables	Cereals and pulses	Milk	Total
Rs. 10,000–20,000	66	33	12	9	120
Rs. 20,000–40,000	39	60	15	6	120
Rs. 40,001–60,000	9	9	3	9	30
60,001 and above	9	12	3	6	30
Total	123	114	33	30	300

Table 2.1: Income and brand using of the Respondents

Factors	Calculated value	Degree of freedom	Table value	Result
Income and brand using	7.136	9	16.81	Significant

Table 3: Buying of Health food product

<i>Buy malted food product</i>	<i>Healthy</i>	<i>Save to consume</i>	<i>Environment friendly</i>	<i>Saving resource for next generation</i>	<i>Total</i>
Departmental stores	39	57	15	9	120
Grocery stores	15	12	6	6	39
Medical stores	21	42	6	6	75
From many convenient shop	36	9	9	12	66
Total	111	120	36	33	300

Table 3.1: Buy malted food product and brand using

<i>Factors</i>	<i>Calculated value</i>	<i>Degree of freedom</i>	<i>Table value</i>	<i>Result</i>
Buy malted food product and brand using	11.859	9	15.91	Significant

Null Hypothesis

There is no relationship between brand using and buy malted food products.

To find the relationship between brand using and buy malted food products of the respondents, a Chi-square test was based and result of the test is shown in the following table.

Suggestion

- There is a need to open more organic product shops in rural areas and more awareness of organic products is necessary among consumers. The products initially should be made available in prominent market places and also gradually, in all the shops and allocation of separate space for organic food products in stores
- The other main reason is that organic products are more expensive in comparison to non-organic products. Hence, people with low level of income cannot afford the expenses on these products. So that the organic consumers are not to purchasing more quantity of products. The varieties of organic products which are available in the rural market are limited. There is a lack of awareness about organic products to rural consumers
- Farmers do not get the full return of the organic production that the consumer get advantages but farmers get loss on that so in this globalized world there is to focus on the return get it by farmers and make a policy to get advantages to farmers
- The common observations are that the majority of the respondents feel that organic food is expensive and they are not getting the products at the reasonable price, so our recommendations are that to increase the demand that helps to reducing the price of the product.

CONCLUSION

The many studies associated with consumers "perceptions of organic food and expectation on future organic food. These studies have focused mostly on demographic characteristics such as consumers' profile, motives, and opinion of rural market factors. There have been many studies carried out with respect to consumers, perceptions of organic food. However, these studies have focused mostly on demographic characteristics such as consumers' profile, motives, and opinion of market factors.

Organically grown products are available in the markets but in limited amounts though the growing demands are there for such products. Vegetables followed by fruits and beans are the most preferred and highly demanded commodities at present and the price of vegetables specially the leafy ones is higher than other normal vegetables. Next major consideration in organic market segment is the health consciousness increase of general people which plays a major role of attention toward healthy product. These studies have analyzed consumers' attitudes and behavior, emphasizing how the consumers are willing to pay the premium price and their trust in organic labels. However, consumers' interest in organic food and confidence with the claimed benefits of organic food, as well as other relevant relationships has not been clarified. Hence, on the basis of the study, it can be concluded that people living in rural area are also want to use organic products but due to less knowledge and low level of income, they cannot buy these products.

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