

COLLEGE STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS AND BUYING HABITS TOWARDS ORGANIC FOOD PRODUCTS (WITH REFERENCE TO NAMAKKAL DISTRICT)

Dr.L.KESAVAN

Assistant Professor

P G & Research Department of Commerce

Kandaswami Kandar's College

P.Velur, Namakkal District

Abstract

The adoption of organic production and processing is highly determined by market demand. Therefore, this is reflected in consumers' perceptions and attitudes toward organic food products. This research draws on a survey of 300 respondents. Results indicated that the main reasons for purchasing organic food products are an expectation of a healthier and environmentally friendly means of production. Organic buyers tend to be older and higher educated than those who do not buy them. In addition, consumers trust in the authenticity of the goods and price are also issues. However, the main barrier to increase the market share of organic food products is consumer information.

Key words: Organic food, consumer behaviour, food labels, consumer awareness, etc.

1. Introduction

Organic farming is “a production system that is managed in accordance with the Act and regulations in this part to respond to site-specific conditions by integrating cultural, biological, and mechanical practices that foster cycling of resources, promote ecological balance, and conserve biodiversity.” Organic farming is a growing sector in India, which is encouraged by the government and many private initiatives. Therefore, production is expected to rise to meet the growing demand in the domestic market for organic foods. The increased range of healthy foods and the establishment of certificates for pesticide controlled vegetables indicate that there is a potential market. This might be true for India, as well, and therefore leads to low levels of confidence in organic production, which would indicate that there is not enough information on the consumers side about organic production. Products meeting the requirements for “100 per cent organic” and “organic” may display these terms and the percentage of organic content on their principal display panel.

2. Statement of the problem

As the Indian society becomes more and more concerned with the safety, nutritional value, and environmental effects of their food and its production, it is important that we gain an understanding of college students' perceptions and buying habits of organically grown foods. It is also important that we find out how college students buying habits of “organic” food products influence their buying decisions. This information will potentially help us meet the growing demand

for organic foods and help farmers to achieve the premium prices that can be available in that segment of the industry. In general, organic produce and labeling requirements can also influence buying decisions among consumers. The study will focus on decision making factors such as price, availability, food safety concerns and environmental impact concerns. The purpose of this study is to investigate college students' perceptions and buying habits of organic food products through survey method, in order to inform farmers of the future market's demands. This study is also to gather information about buyer preferences that will hopefully help farmers, and commodity groups communicate more effectively about product standards and marketing techniques, communication strategies and ranching practices to obtain the highest possible price.

3. Objectives of the study

1. To compile information about college students' perceptions towards organically grown food compared to conventionally grown food.
2. To study the perceptions and buying habits of college students towards organic food.

4. Methodology

This study is mainly based on primary data collected from 300 college students in Namakkal district using simple random sampling method. The primary data were collected with the help of questionnaire. The secondary data were collected from published sources.

5. Analysis and interpretations

TABLE 1
Distribution of Respondents by Gender

Gender	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Male	160	53
Female	140	47
Total	300	100

Source: Primary data

53% of the respondents are male students and 47% of the respondents are female students.

TABLE 2
Distribution of Respondents by Location

Location	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Urban	90	30
Rural	210	70
Total	300	100

Source: Primary data

Out of 300 students, 70% of the respondents are belonging to urban area and 30% of the respondents are belonging to rural area.

TABLE 3
Distribution of Respondents by College

Types of College	No. of. Respondents	Percentage
College of Arts	182	61
College of Science	118	39
Total	300	100

Source: Primary data

61 per cent of the respondents are studying in Arts College, 39 per cent of the respondents are studying in Science College.

TABLE 4
Distribution of Respondents by Education

Education	No. of. Respondents	Percentage
Undergraduate	226	75
Postgraduate	74	25
Total	300	100

Source: Primary data

75 per cent of the respondents are studying in undergraduate course. The remaining 25 per cent of the respondents are studying postgraduate course.

TABLE 5
Awareness about Organic Food Products

Awareness	No. of. Respondents	Percentage
Aware	300	100
Not aware	-	-
Total	300	100

Source: Primary data

The above table shows the awareness level of organic food products. 100 per cent of the respondents are aware about the organic food products

TABLE 6
Frequency of Purchase of Organic Products

Frequency	No. of. Respondents	Percentage
At least once a day	44	15
At least once a week	52	17
Once in a month	174	58
Once every six months	30	10
Total	300	100

Source: Primary data

Out of 300 respondents, 58% of the respondents are purchasing once in a month, 17% of the respondents are purchasing at least once a week, 15% of the respondents are purchasing at least once a day. The remaining 10% of the respondents are purchasing once every six months.

TABLE 7
Reasons for Buying Organic Products

Reasons	No. of. Respondents	Percentage
For health reasons	170	57
Good taste	80	27
I have major worries for farm workers	36	12
Organic food offers outstanding	14	4
Total	300	100

Source: Primary data

57 per cent of the respondents are purchasing for health reasons, 27% of the respondents are purchasing organic food for good taste, 12% of the respondents are purchasing for major worries for farm workers. The remaining 4% of the respondents are purchasing offers outstanding.

TABLE 8
Place of Purchase Organic Products

Place of Purchase	No. of. Respondents	Percentage
Online	18	6
Supermarkets	122	41
Farm shops	160	53
Total	300	100

Source: Primary data

41% of the respondents are purchasing in the supermarkets, 53% of the respondents are purchasing in the farm shops. The remaining 6% of the respondents are purchasing through online.

TABLE 9**Amount Spent by the Respondents for the Purchase of Organic Food**

Amount Spent (Rs.)	No. of. Respondents	Percentage
Below 1000	42	14
1000- 2000	50	17
2000- 3000	188	63
Above 3000	20	6
Total	300	100

Source: Primary data

63% of the respondents are spending Rs.2000-3000, 17% of the respondents are spending Rs.1000-2000, and 14% of the respondents are spending below Rs .000. The remaining 6% of the respondents are spending above Rs.3000 for buying the organic food per week.

TABLE 10**Sources of Awareness of Organic Products**

Sources of Awareness	No. of. Respondents	Percentage
Radio	42	14
Television	160	53
Internet	36	12
Newspaper	62	21
Total	300	100

Source: Primary data

Radio, television internet, and newspaper are the sources of the respondents to aware of organic products at 14%, 53%, 12% and 21% respectively.

TABLE 11**Respondents' Satisfaction of Using Organic Products**

Level of Satisfaction	No. of. Respondents	Percentage
Fully satisfied	190	63
Partly satisfied	40	13
Neutral	58	20
Not satisfied	12	4
Total	300	100

Source: Primary data

Out of 300 respondents, 63% of the respondents are fully satisfied, 20% of the respondents are neutral, and 13% of the respondents are partly satisfied. The remaining 7% of the respondents are not satisfied with the organic products.

TABLE 12

Respondents' Satisfaction with the Price of Organic Products

Level of Satisfaction	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Fully satisfied	38	13
Partly satisfied	60	20
Neutral	22	7
Not satisfied	180	60
Total	300	100

Source: Primary data

Out of 300 respondents, 60% of the respondents are not satisfied, 20% of the respondents are partly satisfied, and 13% of the respondents are fully satisfied about the price of organic products. The remaining 7% of the respondents are neutral about the price.

6. Findings

1. 53% of the respondents are male students, 70% of the respondents are belonging to urban area, and 61% of the respondents are studying in Arts College.
2. 75% of the respondents are studying undergraduate course. All the respondents are aware about the organic food products. 58% of the respondents are purchasing organic products once in a month.
3. 57% of the respondents are purchasing organic products for health reason. 53% of the respondents are purchasing in the farm shops. 63% of the respondents are spending Rs. 2000-3000 per week for the purchase of organic products.
4. 53% of the respondents are known the organic products by television, 63% of the respondents are fully satisfied with the using the organic products, and 60% of the respondents are not satisfied with the price of organic products.

7. Conclusion

This study is an attempt in compiling information about college students' perception and buying habits of organic food. The study found a positive relationship between perception and spending habits. Likewise, there is a negative association between the price point of organic food and the students' spending habits.

8. Reference

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