

A STUDY ON CONSUMERS' PERCEPTION TOWARDS ORGANIC PRODUCTS WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO NAMAKKAL TOWN

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Abstract

There is no common definition of “organic” due to the fact that different countries have different standard for products to be certified “organic”. In simplest words organic foods are minimally processed to maintain the integrity of the food without artificial ingredients, preservatives or irradiation. Organic products are obtained by processes friendly to the environment, by cultivation techniques that consider both the attributes of the final product and the production methods. A wide range of consumers of organic food and non-organic food were addressed and scrutinized to obtain their observations and visions towards organic food. All organic food consumers are not having the same method of approach towards organic food. Subsequently the statistical process guides us to comprehend the relation and the model of the consumer behaviour trends in organic food in India.

Key words: Organic food products, environmental sustainability, biodiversity, ecological management, etc.

1. Introduction

The term “Organic Production” is an ecological management production system that promotes and enhances biodiversity, biological cycles and soil biological activity. It is based on the minimal use of off-farm inputs and on management practices that restore, maintain and enhance “ecological harmony”. Organic food production is a self-regulated industry with government oversight in some countries, distinct from private gardening. Currently, the European Union, the United States, Canada, Japan and many other countries require producers to obtain special certification based on government defined standards in order to market food as organic within their borders. In the context of these regulations, foods marketed as organic are produced in a way that complies with organic standards set by national governments and international organic industry trade organizations.

2. Need for the study

With rising concern of health issues and food safety, many consumers have turned their site to organic products. The increased consumers' interest in organic food has been attributed among others to the growing demand for food free from pesticides and chemical residues. Organic food promotes a balance of human, other living organisms and the nature. It also promotes no artificial preservatives and best maintain the originality of food. This prevents excess use harmful ingredients and thereby ensures health. Consumer interest in organic products is growing alongside a

diversification of the supply. This study attempted to gain knowledge about consumer attitude towards organic food product consumption and to see whether there is any potential this might have for changing their behaviour. The rationale for carrying out this study is that consideration for the environment could come only from well-informed citizens who are aware of, and fully committed to their rights to a quality health and environment. Nevertheless, before any behaviour can be changed, it is necessary to evaluate the current state of consumers' awareness and knowledge. Therefore consumers' attitude, perception towards organic food products, willingness to pay for organic food products and intention to purchase organic food will be the main agenda of this study.

3. Statement of the problem

Growth in organic market in India may occur for a number of reasons. They may be related to changes in consumers' lifestyles or the growth in awareness of consumers regarding food quality. Also, consumer awareness of the need for environment protection is increasing. Organic farming is often considered by consumers as environmental friendly, and this may result in more attention given by consumers to organic farming. 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. Hence, the study was conducted to find out the impact of organic products in Namakkal town.

4. Objectives of the study

1. To study the consumers' perception towards purchase of organic products in Namakkal town
2. To find out the factors influencing the consumers in the purchase of organic products.
3. To find out the barriers in the free flow of organic products in the market.

5. Research methodology

This study is based on primary and secondary data. The primary data were collected from selected consumers on simple random sampling technique with the help of questionnaire. A sample of 200 consumers of organic products in Namakkal town was selected. The secondary data were collected from various sources. Mean and percentile analyses were employed.

6. Data analysis and interpretations

TABLE 1
Distribution of Respondents by Age

Age (years)	No. of Respondents	Percentage
18-25	72	36
26-35	36	18
36-45	40	20
Above 45	52	26
Total	200	100

Source: Primary data

The above table shows that 36% of the respondents are in the age group of 18 to 25 years, 18% of the respondents are in the age group of 26 to 35 years, 20% of the respondents are in the age group of 36 to 45 years, and 26% of the respondents are in the age group of above 45 years.

TABLE 2
Distribution of Respondents by Gender

Gender	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Male	120	60
Female	80	40
Total	200	100

Source: Primary data

Table 2 shows that 60% of the respondents are male and 40% of the respondents are female.

TABLE 3
Distribution of Respondents by Occupation

Occupation	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Self employed	100	50
Salaried	48	24
House wife	36	18
Others	16	8
Total	200	100

Source: Primary data

Table 3 shows that 50% of the respondents are self employed, 24% of the respondents are salaried, and 18% of the respondents are housewives. The remaining 8% of the respondents are others.

TABLE 4

Distribution of Respondents by Location

Location	No. of. Respondents	Percentage
Urban	124	62
Rural	76	38
Total	200	100

Source: Primary data

Table 4 shows that 62% of the respondents are belonging to urban area and 38% of the respondents are belonging to rural area.

TABLE 5

Distribution of Respondents by Income

Monthly income (Rs).	No. of. Respondents	Percentage
Below 5000	82	41
5000- 10000	40	20
10000- 20000	28	14
Above 20000	50	25
Total	200	100

Source: Primary data

Table 5 shows that 41% of the respondents are having monthly income below Rs 5000, 25% of the respondents are having above Rs.20000, and 20% of the respondents are having Rs 5000- Rs 10000. 14% of the respondents are having monthly income in the range of Rs 10000- 20000.

TABLE 6

Familiarity with the Organic Products

Opinion	No. of. Respondents	Percentage
Natural food	120	60
Healthy food	30	15
Organic food	40	20
Manure food	10	5
Total	200	100

Source: Primary data

Table 6 shows that 60% of the respondents said organic food is natural food, 20% of the respondents said organic food is organic, 15% of the respondents said organic food is healthy food and 5% of the respondents said organic food cultivated by using manure.

TABLE 7**Place of Purchase of Organic Products**

Place of Purchase	No. of. Respondents	Percentage
Super market	18	9
Local shop	24	12
Farmer's market	32	16
Organic shop	126	63
Total	200	100

Source: Primary data

Table 7 shows that 63% of the respondents are purchasing organic food in organic shop, 16% of the respondents are purchasing in farmer's market, 12% of the respondents are purchasing in local shop, and 9% of the respondents are purchasing in super market.

TABLE 8**Frequency of Purchasing Organic Products**

Frequency	No. of. Respondents	Percentage
Once in a week	44	22
Once in a month	128	64
Occasionally	28	14
Total	200	100

Source: Primary data

The above table shows that 64% of the respondents are purchasing the organic products once in a month, 22% of the respondents are purchasing the organic products once in a week, and 14% of the respondents are purchasing the organic products occasionally.

TABLE 9**Purchase of Organic Products**

Organic Products	No. of. Respondents	Percentage
Vegetables and fruits	104	52
Dairy products	32	16
Pulses and cereals	48	24
Non-food products	16	8
Total	200	100

Source: Primary data

Table 9 shows that 52% of the respondents are purchasing vegetables and fruits, 24% of the respondents are purchasing pulses and cereals, 16% of the respondents are purchasing dairy products and 8% of the respondents are purchasing non-food products.

TABLE 10

Reasons for the Purchase of Organic Products

Reasons	No. of. Respondents	Percentage
Healthy	88	44
Save to consume	12	6
Environment friendly	40	20
Saving resources for next generation	60	30
Total	200	100

Source: Primary data

Healthy, save to consume, environmental friend, saving resources for next generation are the reasons for the respondents to purchase organic products at 44%, 6%, 20% and 30% respectively.

7. Findings

- 36% of the respondents are in the age group of 18 to 25 years. 60% of the respondents are male. 50% of the respondents are self employed. 62% of the respondents are belonging to urban area. 41% of the respondents are having monthly income of below Rs.5000.
- 100% of the respondents preferred organic products and they are consuming the same. 60% of the respondents are familiar with the organic products as a natural food. 63% of the respondents are purchase the organic products in organic shop.
- 64% of the respondents are purchase the organic products once in a month. 52% of the respondents are mostly purchase vegetables and fruits. 44% of the respondents are purchasing the organic products for health reason.

8. Suggestions

1. Organic products have lost their demand because of less taste. Hence, steps should be taken to improve the taste of products.
2. Cooking time is more for organic products. Something should be done to speed up the cooking time of the organic products.
3. Organic products are limited in variety. Therefore, the variety of items should be increased.

4. The price of organic products is high. The expectations of consumers is that price of organic products can be made competitive with normal terms.
5. Organic products are not yet popular among consumers. Hence, steps should be taken to popularize the organic products.

9. Conclusion

Majority of the consumers were aware of organic food, its benefits and problems associated with conventional food. However, this awareness was relatively more among educated respondents. However, still majority buy conventional food and not organic regularly due to some prominent reasons like high price, lack of information, lack of easy as well as regular availability and risk of getting cheated. Effective marketing structure and necessary support from the governmental agencies for organic food is required. It can also be done through NGOs and other Government agencies since it is safer and healthier food along with private sector participation. Improvement in supply chain management and production planning will solve the issues like irregular supply and limited stock.

10. Reference

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