



“MARKETING STRATEGIES OF ORGANIC FOOD COMPANIES: A PERCEPTION STUDY WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO KARNATAKA”

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**“A STUDY ON CONSUMERS’ PERCEPTION TOWARDS ORGANIC FOOD PRODUCTS IN
MYSORE CITY”**

Abstract

India is the second most populous country in the world, and a sizable portion of its people depend heavily on agricultural pursuits. There is a growing trend for organic products today. In India, organic agriculture is not a replacement idea. These days, we all lead busy lives. There has been a tendency towards conventional food items that are easily accessible in supermarkets, such as vegetables, fruits, dairy products, meat products, and so on, due to the scarcity of our time and changes in lifestyle, tastes, and preferences in dietary habits. Conventional meat and dairy products are those that come from animals that were developed with the use of antibiotics and growth hormones. Traditional vegetables and fruits are those that are cultivated by the application of fertilizers and pesticides. Initially, people did not consider the safety, quality, and effects that conventional or inorganic food products can have on their health. With a sample size of 100 respondents familiar with organic products, the current study's primary focus is how consumers perceive organic products. Descriptive statistics were used to

analyze the data that were collected. If people consumed organic products in the same amounts as conventionally grown products already consumed, organic products would undoubtedly result in higher levels of public health.

Keywords: Organic products, perception, health, consumption, awareness

Introduction

Food consumption patterns are rapidly changing due to environmental issues, concerns about the nutritional value of food, and health issues (Tsakiridou et al., 2006). Traditionally, many farmers were unaware of modern and scientific food production techniques. Thus, they did not use synthetic fertilizers, pesticides, or other crop-preserving chemicals in food production. They used to grow pesticide-free food for self-consumption only. Bolstered by Industrialization and improvements in agricultural chemicals, the farmers shifted to such forms of food production (Raji, 2020). As a result, organic farming took a backseat, and consumers began purchasing conventionally grown food because of its abundance and lower prices (Wee et al., 2014).

As consumers' awareness about the harmful effects of highly pollutant contaminant food products increases, they are turning towards organic food products. Organic food is a product from a farming system that avoids using synthetic fertilizers and pesticides (Tsakiridou et al., 2006). In addition, organic food products do not contain genetically modified materials to reach a sustainable agriculture system (Basha et al., 2015). The principles used in the farming system apply the benefit of modern scientific understanding and technologies to offer more sustainable food production (Nasir and Karakaya, 2014). The organic market has recently increased considerably and is widely regarded as one of the biggest growth markets in the food industry (Hughner et al., 2007). The growth and consumption of organic food products have phenomenally increased in recent years due to increasing awareness (Basha et al., 2015). In response to worries about conventional agriculture practices, food safety, human health concerns, considerations for animal welfare, and environmental concerns, interest in organically produced food is rising globally (Canavari et al., 2007). Therefore, purchasing organic foods can be seen as an action motivated by beliefs about the healthiness and possibly good taste of these products and the positive impact on the environment and welfare of production animals. (Tsakiridou et al. 2006). The premium price is the main barrier to consuming an organic product, and no scientific evidence proves the organic benefits products claim (Melovic et al., 2020).

Literature Review

Zanoli et al. (2002) studied the consumer's product knowledge and motivations about organic food. The study was based on Primary data collected from 60 respondents. The study found that lower prices and better distribution help to increase demand for organic products. At the same time, potential organic consumers want good-tasting and easy-to-use products that are not perishable. Further, this study highlighted that Consumers are interested in being aware of how organic production and processing differ from conventional ones and how organic products can be distinguished. The researcher suggested that better packaging should be a target for organic processors

Ozguven (2012) analyzed the motivational factors of buying organic foods. Data were collected from 45 respondents. This study used SPSS to analyze the data. The researcher used 5 points Likert scale to measure consumers' motivation levels. Factors used to measure motivation are quality, security, trust, senses, price, convenience, brand name value, ethical self-identity, environmental view, healthy, and food safety. The study identified a strong direct correlation between quality, price, health, and food safety dimensions and that Izmir consumers prefer organic milk. The study highlighted that health, quality, price, and food safety were the most important factors motivating consumers. The study findings indicated that health and price were the most important predictors of buying the organic product

Basha et al. (2015) determined the motives that turn consumers toward organic food products. The study was based on primary data collected from 50 respondents. Environmental concerns, health concerns, and lifestyle consciousness are the variable used in this study. The study concludes that the reasons advocated by the consumers for buying organic food products were varied, and primarily the motivations behind their decision to purchase include concerns for the environment, health concern and lifestyle, food product quality, and their subjective norms. Further, the researcher identified that consumer behavior was changing towards purchasing many environmental-friendly and organic products due to awareness of environmental degradation and related issues.

Ueasangkomsatea (2016) studied consumers' attitudes and intentions to buy organic foods under the principle of sustainable development. The study was based on primary data collected from 316 respondents in Thailand by using a simple random sampling method. The study showed that Thai consumers realized the health aspect of organic foods. Further, the study results showed that the local origin aspect positively correlated with buying intention organic food. In addition, the researcher found that Thai consumers had the intention to buy organic foods, but the level of purchase intention was not high.

Ralston, Raj Vaidya, Abha, and Wankhede (2018) attempted to identify and understand the factors influencing the Purchase Intention and Actual Purchase of Organic Food within the Indian Urban market. The results indicate that health, environmentally friendly processes, and quality are the primary factors influencing the customers' purchase intentions; however, when it comes to the actual purchase, the product produced through an environmentally friendly process is not influencing the consideration of the customer. This is expected to help the marketers convert the customers' Purchase intention to Actual Purchase.

Tandon (2019) examined the associations among attitude, motivational dynamics, and behavior of consumers in buying organic food. The study was based on primary data collected from 378 respondents. The researcher suggested that marketing managers and policy-makers should educate consumers about its adoption's benefits and positive societal outcomes. They should also develop particular campaigns by appealing to basic psychological needs and personal goals that can create or influence consumer motivations, such as the need to preserve their ecological surroundings. Additionally, the researcher suggested that educating customers about different organic certifications and certifying bodies could build trust in consumers' minds about the authenticity of organic labels. Such trust could appeal to consumers' ethical self-identity, who, in turn, may be induced to buy organic food with proper labeling certifications.

Karthika and Senthilkumar (2019) determined the main factors influencing consumers' intention to purchase organic meat in Dharmapuri Town. It is interesting to spot whether motives or psychological variables independently and jointly explain the intention to get organic meat. The objective of this study is to study the attitude of consumers buying and using organic products in Dharmapuri Town to identify the level of satisfaction of consumers towards organic food products. The findings would be helpful for policy and program development of the country's organic meat industry, especially to related authorities such as the Ministry of Agriculture. The relevant authorities and agencies should encourage consumers to eat and purchase organic meat instead of conventional meat.

Anwasha Chattopadhyay and Priyanka Khanzode (2019) understood the consumption pattern of individuals in Kolkata. The main objectives of the research were to study the consumers' consumption patterns in Kolkata and to give an idea about factors affecting consumers' consumption of organic food in Kolkata. The data showed that organic food consumption has risen in the last five years, but it should have risen more than what has happened. People are aware of organic food and, therefore, the benefits driven by it.

Dangi (2020) investigated existing research on factors impacting organic food purchases and identified the relative influence of various determinants. The paper was based on data collected through secondary literature sources related to organic food consumption. The study reviewed that individual factors like health concerns, environmental concerns, knowledge, awareness, eco-labels, and price, followed by trust in organic food, are the most important factors in organic food purchase. The researcher suggested that eco-labels increase trust in organic food by reducing information asymmetry in consumers. Still, there were differences in perception and factor importance between high-income and emerging economies.

Scope of the Study

Since that food is the primary determinant of one's health, consumers in the current environment are much more health concerned and selective about what they eat. Consumers began promoting the use of foods produced using organic farming practices when they realized the detrimental effects of synthetic fertilizers and chemical pesticides on their health. With the opening of exclusive organic outlets, specific organic counters in supermarkets, special booths in exclusive farmer markets, and farm-side selling, the demand for organic food is constantly growing, particularly in the urban market. This study aims to understand how consumers in Mysuru perceive organic food products. To do this, sample data of customers from Mysuru city was collected and looked at how they perceive and act towards organic food goods.

Research Objectives

1. To examine the level of awareness towards organic products in Mysuru City.
2. To examine the consumer's perception and behaviour towards organic products in Mysuru City

Hypotheses of the Study

H₀₁: There is no much awareness of organic products in Mysuru City.

H₀₂: The perception and behaviour of consumers toward organic products are not satisfactory.

Research Methodology

Data Collection Methods

The study is based on primary and secondary data.

The primary data was collected from selected consumers on Simple Random sampling techniques and Retail outlets of Organic products, Organic Products Marketing Agencies by administering the structured questionnaires.

The secondary data had collected from the Department of Horticulture, Organic Farming Certification Agencies, APEDA, District Statistical Office in Mysore, NISARGA and HASIRU Organic Products Marketing Agencies, and other agencies involved in production; and marketing of organic products in Mysuru city. The secondary data is also collected from published books, reports, journals, magazines, and the internet.

Statistical Tool for Analysis

Descriptive statistics such as frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation are used for analysis. T-test was adopted to analyze the consumers' response towards organic products in Mysore city.

Limitations of the Study

The study has been confined to Mysuru City and organic products. The inference was drawn purely from the responses obtained from the respondent in the study area.

Results and Discussions

Table 1: The Classification of Respondents Based on Gender

SL. No.	Gender	No. of respondents	Percentage
1	Male	36	36
2	Female	64	64
Total		100	100

Source: Primary Data

Table 1 reveals that 64 percent of respondents were female, remaining 36% were male. The majority of the female respondents purchased organic products.

Table 2: The Classification of Respondents on their Age

SL. No.	Age	No. of Respondent	Percentage
1	15- 25 years	24	24
2	25-40	34	34
3	40-50	22	22
4	Above 50	20	20
Total		100	100.0

Source: Primary Data

Table 2 shows that 24 percent of the respondents are in the Age between 15-25 Years old, 34 percent of respondents are in the age between 25-40 years, 22 percent of respondents are between 40-50 years old age and the remaining 20 percent of respondents are above 50 years old out of 100 respondents. The ages between 25 and 40 are well aware of organic products and health, so they purchase more in the study area.

Table 3: Monthly Income of the Respondents

SL. No.	Income of the Family	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1	10000 - 15000	6	6
2	15000-20000	27	27
3	20000-25000	46	46
4	Above 25000	21	21
Total		100	100.0

Source: Primary Data

Table 3 shows that 6% of respondents have a monthly income between Rs 10000-15000, 27% of respondents have an income between Rs 15000-20000, 46% of respondents have an income between Rs 20000-25000, and the rest 21% of respondents have an income above Rs.25000, out of 100 respondents considered for the study.

Table 4: The classification of respondents based on their Qualification

SL. No.	Qualification	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1	Secondary School	6	6
2	Diploma	23	23
3	Graduate	62	62
4	Postgraduate	8	8
Total		100	100.0

Source: Primary Data

Table 4 shows that 62 percent of the respondents were Graduates, 6 percent of Respondents had Secondary school education, 23 percent were diploma holders, and the remaining 8 percent of the respondents were postgraduates. All the respondents were aware of using organic products in the study.

Table 5: Classification of respondents based on Total Family Members in the Household

Sl. No.	Total Family Members	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1	2-3	53	53
2	3-5	29	29
3	More than 5	18	18
Total		100	100.0

Source: Primary Data

Table 5 shows that 53 percent of the respondents have between 2-3 members in a family, 29% have 3-5 members, and the remaining 18% have more than 5 members.

Table 6: Preference for Organic products among respondents

Sl. No.	Preference	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1	Yes	100	100.0
2	No	0	0
	Total	100	100.0

Source: Primary Data

Table 6 shows respondents' preferences for organic products in the study area. All the respondents preferred organic products and are consuming the same, believing that using organic products maintains good health.

Table 7: Classification of Respondents based on the frequency of purchase of products

SL. No.	Duration	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1	Daily	48	48
2	Weekly	42	42
3	Once a month	8	8
4	Few Times a Year	2	2
Total		100	100.0

Source: Primary data

Table 7: shows that 48 percent of respondents buy Organic products daily because most organic products are perishable; 42 percent of Respondents buy once weekly, 8 percent buy once a month, and the remaining 2 percent buy organic products a few times a year.

Table 8: Place of Purchase of organic products by the Respondents

SL. No.	Place of purchase	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1	Super/ Retail Markets	24	24
2	Organic Stores	63	63
3	Producers Farm	8	8
4	Others	5	5
Total		100	100.0

Source: Primary Data

Table 8 shows that 63 percent of the respondents purchase organic products in organic stores because of quality, freshness, price, and other factors; 8 percent go to nearer producer's farms, and 24 percent go to supermarkets and retail shops.

Table 9: Motives for buying Organic Products

SL. No.	Reasons	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1	Provides Good Health	63	63
2	Prefer taste/ feelings	10	10
3	The quality of food is better	20	20
4	Low Price	7	7
Total		100	100.0

Source: Primary Data

Table 9 shows that 63 percent of respondents prefer organic food as it helps maintain good health, 10 percent prefer its taste and other feelings, and 20 percent prefer the Quality of food. The remaining 7 percent of the respondents prefer organic products due to low prices.

Table 10: Duration of using Organic Products

SL. No.	Duration	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1	Less than a Year	10	10
2	2 Years	36	36
3	3 Years	40	40
4	More than 3 Years	14	14
Total		100	100

Source: Primary Data

Table 10 shows that 40 percent of the respondents have been purchasing organic products for 3 years, 14 percent have been using more than 3 years, 36 percent have been using them for 2 years, and the remaining 10 percent have been using organic products for 1 year.

Table 11: Type of Organic Products bought

SL. No.	Type of Products	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1	Food Products	20	20
2	Fruits and Vegetables	36	36
3	Beverages	10	10
4	Cereals and Pulses	7	7
5	Milk	27	27
Total		100	100

Source: Primary Data

Table 11 shows that most respondents 36 percent usually buy fruits and vegetables because fruits and vegetables are perishable. 20 percent of people buy food products, 27 percent purchase milk, and 10 percent buy beverages. The remaining 7 percent use cereals and pulses.

Table 12: Respondents whose purchases of organic goods were impacted by the economic recession

SL. No.	Economic recession affected	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1	Increased Spend	68	68
2	Remained same	18	18
3	Reduced spent	14	14
Total		100	100.0

Source: Primary data

Table 12 shows that 68 percent of respondents incurred more expenditure on organic products because it is more expensive than non-organic products, and 14 percent of respondents thought that it reduces spending. The remaining 18 percent of respondents felt no difference between organic and non-organic products.

Table 13: Respondents' view on the price of Organic Products

SL. No.	The price of organic products	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1	Expensive	75	75
2	Moderate	18	18
3	Very low	7	7
Total		100	100.0

Source: Primary Data

Table 13 indicates that 75 percent of the respondents opined that organic products are expensive because input and procurement costs are more than conventional products. 18 percent of respondents expressed a reasonable opinion, and the remaining 7 percent opined that it is very low compared to non-organic products.

Table 14: Reasons for not buying the organic products

SL. No.	Reasons	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1	Too expensive	56	56
2	Not many choices	12	12
3	Difficult to find Organic Products in the area	25	25
4	Lack of trust in Organic Products	7	7
Total		100	100.0

Source: Primary Data

Table 14 shows that 25 percent of the respondents did not buy organic products because the supply was not regular. 12 percent of respondents opined that there were limited commodity choices, and 56 percent did not buy as they felt it was too expensive to buy organic products. The remaining 7 percent did not trust organic products.

Table 15: Readiness to buy organic products if the price increased

SL. No.	Percentage increase	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1	0-15%	42	42
2	15%-30%	35	35
3	30%-50%	17	17
4	More than 50%	6	6
Total		100	100.0

Source: Primary Data

Table 15 shows that 42 percent of respondents are ready to purchase when the cost increases between 0 to 15 percent, and 35% of respondents are prepared to buy when there is an increase in price between 15 to 30 percent. 17 percent of respondents are ready when the price increases between 30 to 50%, and the remaining 6 percent are prepared to purchase when the price rise is more than 50 percent.

Table 16: Ranking of organic products

Sl. No.	The rank of organic products	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1	Best	58	58
2	Better	23	23
3	Good	15	15
4	Same as non-Organic products	4	4
Total		100	100.0

Source: Primary Data

Table 16 shows that 58 percent of respondents agreed that organic products were best in all aspects. 23% agreed organic products were better than non-organic products. 13 percent agreed that organic products were good. In contrast, only 4 percent stated that there was no difference between organic and non-organic products.

Table 17: Perception of customers towards Organic products

SL. No.	Statements	Mean	Std. Dev.	t-value	Sig.
	Health				
1	Organic food products contain more vitamins and minerals	4.39	1.043	44.653	0.000
2	Organic food products are healthier than conventional food because they are produced without preservatives or artificial colors	4.37	1.216	67.192	0.000
3	Choosing organic food products is suitable for ensuring good health	4.22	0.963	68.432	0.000
	Safety				
4	Organic farming is the most convincing way of food safety	4.08	0.674	47.840	0.000
5	Organic food products are safer to eat as they are chemical-free.	4.11	1.123	58.342	0.000
	Environmental friendly and animal welfare				

6	Organic farming can protect the environment without harmful synthetic chemical pesticides and fertilizers.	4.23	0.638	61.737	0.000
7	Organic farming can prevent the contamination and pollution of soil, air, water, and food supply.	4.20	0.827	46.268	0.000
8	Organic farming uses less energy	4.05	0.815	47.346	0.000
9	Organic farming always considers the animal's well-being	4.11	1.038	52.645	0.000
	Quality				
10	Organic food products have better quality than conventional food	4.25	1.054	38.780	0.000
11	Organic food is often fresher because it doesn't contain preservatives.	4.28	0.834	41.340	0.000

Source: Computed Data

From Table 17 above, the mean values range from 4.08 to 4.39 with the respective standard deviation. The 't' values (44.653, 67.192, 68.432, 47.840, 58.542, 61.737, 46.268, 47.346, 52.645, 38.780, and 41.340) are statistically significant at the 5 % level. Therefore, it can be concluded that the perception of customers toward organic products is satisfactory.

Findings of the Study

- Most organic products consumers are aged between 25-40 years, contributing to 34 percent.
- 62 percent of the organic products consumers are Graduates, followed by Diploma education with 23 percent.
- In Mysore City, out of 100 consumers, everyone preferred organic products.
- 48 percent of consumers purchase organic products daily.
- The organic products stores are very few in Mysore City, whereas 63 percent of the consumers are purchased from organic stores, followed by Supermarkets with 24 percent.
- 36 percent preferred organic fruits and vegetables, followed by food products, with 20 percent in the study area.
- The consumer opined that organic products maintain good health (63 percent), the quality of food (20 percent), and good taste (10 percent).
- 75 percent of the consumers expressed their opinion towards price as expensive.
- The main reasons for not consuming organic products by the consumers are the unavailability of organic products regularly and not many choices in organic products.
- The overall Ranking of organic products by the consumers is very good (best), followed by better and good with 66 percent, 18 percent, and 13 percent, respectively.

The study reveals the following opinions of respondents while purchasing organic products in the markets:

- The biggest issue for consumers of organic products is the inconsistent availability of organic goods. Consumer who prefers organic products occasionally buys non-organic items as well.
- The price difference between organic and non-organic products is significant, which prevent buyers of organic products from buying more products.
- There are a finite number of organic product variants on the market.
- Consumers are not sufficiently informed about organic products.
- Organic items are not adequately certified by any government or body that certifies organic products.
- There are not many stores selling organic goods in the city.
- Technology is inadequate for the purchase of organic goods.

Suggestions

The following are the suggestion made based on the results of the study.

- Every new extension area in Mysore City needs a marketing shop for organic items.
- It's important to raise customer awareness of organic products.
- The consumption of organic food products would rise with continued improvements in product attributes.
- Better taste and frequent viewing of organic food product advertisements would encourage consumers to buy these goods. Advertising for organic food items has been linked to higher levels of knowledge, particularly among customers.
- Familiarity, personal philosophy, social connection, monetary cost, and habits influenced people to purchase organic goods.
- The companies' marketing activities determine how well-known organic food goods are among consumers. There needs to be a more widespread promotion of the availability of organic foods.
- Positioning organic food items based on their unique qualities and allocating special shares for organic food items in department shops
- Positioning organic food goods based on their reputation for high quality and being "only organic"; positioning based on consumer ideas about the benefits they receive from eating them.
- Consumers' "never buying" attitudes could be changed by informing them of the advantages of organic food.
- The main barrier to not purchasing organic food is the price premium. Customers must be encouraged to buy even at a slight price premium rather than simply staying away, and on the other hand, the cost of production and marketing must be kept in mind.
- The products should initially be made available in well-known markets and then gradually in all stores.

- The consumption of organic food will increase customers' environmental consciousness, transforming them into "Green Consumers" who value the environment.
- "Organic" is to be marketed as "the way of life" rather than just a "product."
- The cooperative and marketing divisions for agriculture should assist farmers in obtaining a fair price for organic produce.
- Farmers can ensure the quality of their organic produce by being certified by the Organic Certification Department, which enables them to sell it for a profit.
- Large-scale production of organic food products and their accessibility should go hand in hand to create demand. A desire among homemakers in the market for organic food goods can be sparked by using a more responsible approach to advertising.

Conclusion

Consumer behaviour is vital in the market for organic products. Organic product marketers must be creative and dynamic to keep up with changing consumer habits in the organic products market among urban consumers. For a long time, the value of the organic product was disregarded. As a result of environmental sustainability, emphasis is shifted away from conventional farming and towards organic products. The survey revealed that although consumers knew of imagery and availability, they were not wholly devoted to buying organic products. Without a doubt, the respondent was drawn to organic products. So, to successfully sell organic products, marketers must develop moral and realistic campaigns. They also need to make their products readily available in quantity and diversity.

Although there is an increasing demand for such products, only a limited number of organically cultivated products are available in the markets. Customers are willing to pay a price premium of between 5 and 50 percent for organic goods, which could be seen as the price of investing in people's health. Consumer attitudes and views about the product, and ultimately their purchasing decisions, may change due to increased knowledge and awareness of organic products. Vegetables, followed by fruits and pulses, are the most popular and in-demand goods. The cost of vegetables, particularly leafy vegetables, is greater than that of other types of vegetables. Yet, customers' preferences for organic products are influenced by quality factors, with flavour, freshness, and general appearance ranking as the most significant. Limited and unpredictable supply, higher product prices, and limited access and information affect consumers' willingness to buy.

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