

# FACTORS INFLUENCING TO PREFER ORGANIC VEGETABLES – A STUDY WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO DHARMAPURI DISTRICT

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## Abstract

The main objective of the study is to measure the factors influencing the consumers' preference to purchase organic vegetables in Dharmapuri district. Both primary and secondary data are used for the study. For this purpose, the primary data is collected from the respondents through questionnaire. The questionnaire consists of various questions focusing on the factors influencing the consumers' preferences to purchase organic vegetables. The factors influencing the consumers on purchase decision in the study area are evaluated and analyzed by using percentage analysis, mean score, standard deviation and analysis of variance. It is found that agriculturists have preferred to use eco friendly products and the least of the respondents belong to retail store for purchasing the eco friendly products. Out of twelve, five variables were closely associated with the consumer attitude towards eco friendly products. Hence, it is recommended to the retailers and marketers to need to raise public awareness and usage of the importance of eco friendly products in the study area.

**Key words:** changing environment, eco friendly products, ecological sensibility, environmental problems, green awareness, green consumer, green marketing, pollution free environment, etc.

## 1. Introduction

The word 'organic' refers to the way farmers grow and process agricultural products, such as fruits, vegetables, grains, dairy products and meat. Organic farming practices are designed to encourage soil and water conservation and reduce pollution. Farmers who grow organic produce conduct more sophisticated crop rotations and spread much or manure to keep weeds at bay rather than using chemical herbicides and fertilizers. In India, it is estimated that 65 per cent of the country's cropped area is organic by default, as small farmers have no choice but to farm without chemical fertilizers and pesticides which they cannot afford. The organic movement began in the early 1900s in response to the shift towards synthetic nitrogen fertilizers and pesticides in the early days of industrial agriculture by a relatively small group of farmers. In recent years, environmental awareness has driven demand and conversation to organic farming. Currently, the organic market is moving from a niche market to a mainstream market within the agricultural industry. Although organic agriculture is now going main stream, demand for the products remains concentrated in Europe and North America. Organic farming is a method of crop and livestock production that involves much more than choosing not to use pesticides, fertilizers, genetically modified organisms, antibiotics and growth hormones. Organic production is a holistic system designed to optimize the productivity and fitness of diverse communities within the agro-ecosystem, including soil organisms, plants, livestock and people. The

principal goal of organic production is to develop enterprises that are sustainable and harmonious with the environment.

## **2. Organic farming in India**

The organic farming system in India is not new and is being followed from ancient time onwards. It is a method of farming system which primarily aimed at cultivating the land and raising crops in such a way, so as to keep the soil alive and in good health by use of organic wastes and other biological materials along with beneficial microbes to release nutrients to crops for increased sustainable production in an eco friendly pollution free environment. Organic farming has been practiced in India for thousands of years. The great Indian civilization thrived on organic farming. India was one of the most prosperous countries in the world until the British invaded and ruled it. In traditional India, the entire industry of agriculture was practiced using organic techniques, where the fertilizers and pesticides were obtained from plant and animal products.

## **3. Organic products and markets in India**

Major organic produces in India include plantation crops, cereals, pulses, oilseeds, fruits, vegetables, besides honey, cotton and sugarcane especially for jaggery. The organic products available in the domestic market are rice, wheat, tea, coffee, pulses and vegetables. On the other hand, products available for export market, besides these, include cashew nuts, cotton, oilseeds, fruits, ayurveda products and medicinal herbs. The major export markets for Indian organic products are the EU, the USA, Canada, Australia and the Middle East Asian countries.

## **4. Statement of the problem**

The market for organic vegetables in India has emerged because of the lucrative export potential available for the producers. Incidentally, in India, most of the organic produce is grown to be exported to the global market. The rest is sold at predetermined retail outlets. So, if the trend for organic vegetables is growing among producers then, its benefits must naturally reach the local population of a country. This will also ensure that the organic vegetables are nutrient rich as processing required would be minimal from the point of origin and consumption. This study has been made to survey among the consumers of organic vegetables in Dharmapuri district. As environmental sustainability is an important issue, in this regard there is a need to study the organic vegetables and also to review the role of organic vegetables in the environment.

## 5. Objectives of the study

1. To study the demographic profile of the consumers using organic vegetables in Dharmapuri district.
2. To find out the factors influencing the consumers on purchase decision in the study area.

## 6. Research methodology

The study was conducted with 170 respondents and the questionnaire was administered to collected primary data. The secondary data were collected through various records, reputed monthly journals, articles, magazines, study materials and websites. The present study is restricted to Dharmapuri district in Tamilnadu. The study was based on survey method. The researcher has used convenient sampling technique. After the collection of primary data, they have been thoroughly verified, edited, and coded. The factors influencing the consumers on purchase decision in the study area are evaluated and analyzed by using percentage analysis, mean score, standard deviation and analysis of variance.

## 7. Results and discussions

### 7.1. Respondents distribution

The socio-economic profile of the consumers such as gender, age, education, monthly family income, marital status and period of using organic vegetables are analyzed by using descriptive analysis. The results are presented in Table 1.

**TABLE 1**  
**Socio-Economic Profile of the Consumers**

Profile of the Respondents		Sample Frequency	Percentage	Mean Score	SD
Gender	Male	78	45.9	3.69	0.41
	Female	92	54.1	3.68	0.39
Age (years)	Upto 25	24	14.1	3.62	0.50
	25 - 30	35	20.6	3.80	0.36
	31 - 40	65	38.2	3.60	0.39
	Above 40	46	27.1	3.76	0.35
Education	School level	32	18.8	3.68	0.34
	Graduate	96	56.5	3.65	0.41
	Professional	31	18.2	3.79	0.45
	No formal education	11	6.5	3.70	0.23
Monthly Family Income (Rs)	Upto 12,000	56	32.9	3.66	0.31
	12,001 to 20,000	68	40.0	3.76	0.39
	20,001 to 30,000	25	14.7	3.65	0.49

	Above 30,000	21	12.4	3.55	0.48
Marital Status	Married	104	61.2	3.68	0.42
	Unmarried	66	38.8	3.69	0.37
Period of Using	Since 1 year	23	13.5	3.64	0.46
	2 years	38	22.3	3.72	0.33
	3 years	48	28.3	3.65	0.44
	More than 3 years	61	35.9	3.71	0.38

Source: Primary Data

It is observed that 45.9 per cent of the respondents are male and 54.1 per cent of the respondents are female. Majority (54.1%) of the respondents are female who prefer organic vegetables than the male counter parts. The majority (38.2%) of the respondents belongs to the age group of 31-40 years and also the majority (56.5%) of the respondents is graduates mainly prefer organic vegetables. It is inferred that the majority (40.0%) of the respondents are earning Rs.12001 to 20000 as their family monthly income and the majority of the respondents are married.

It is found that among the two categories of gender, male respondents are having the maximum influence with mean score and standard deviation were 3.69 and 0.41 respectively to purchase organic vegetables. Among the age group, the respondents who belonged to 25 - 30 years age category got the mean score and standard deviation values as 3.80 and 0.36 respectively having the maximum influence. The mean score and standard deviation of the professionals were 3.79 and 0.45 respectively. Among four categories of family monthly income, the mean score and standard deviation of the respondents' family income upto Rs.12000 were 3.66 and 0.31 respectively are having the maximum influence to purchase organic vegetables. Among the two categories of marital status, the unmarried consumers got the mean score and standard deviation as 3.69 and 0.37 respectively are having maximum influence to purchase organic vegetables.

## 7.2. Factors influencing the purchase decision

An analysis has been prepared to identify the factors influenced to purchase the organic vegetables of the respondents. The details are furnished in Table 2.

**TABLE 2**  
**Factors Influencing Purchase Decision of Organic Vegetables**

Factors	SA	A	N	DA	SDA
High nutritional value	84 (49.4)	42 (24.7)	20 (11.8)	15 (8.8)	9 (5.3)
Support organic movement	61 (35.9)	67 (39.4)	23 (13.5)	11 (6.5)	8 (4.7)
Safe to consume	80 (47.1)	53 (31.2)	18 (10.6)	13 (7.6)	6 (3.5)
Environment friendly	59 (34.7)	60 (35.3)	23 (13.5)	16 (9.4)	12 (7.1)
Easily available	44 (25.9)	35 (20.6)	39 (22.9)	32 (18.8)	20 (11.8)
High quality	39 (22.9)	52 (30.6)	36 (21.2)	27 (15.9)	16 (9.4)
Support local farmers	54 (31.8)	47 (27.6)	45 (26.5)	13 (7.6)	11 (6.5)
Freshness	41 (24.1)	62 (36.5)	15 (8.8)	21 (12.4)	31 (18.2)
Standard	52 (30.6)	41 (24.1)	46 (27.1)	18 (10.6)	13 (7.6)
Chemical free	63 (37.1)	42 (24.7)	19 (11.2)	21 (12.4)	25 (14.7)

SA: Strongly Agree; A: Agree; N: Neutral; DA: Disagree; SDA: Strongly disagree

From the above table it is inferred that the respondents are strongly agreed towards influence of purchase decision of organic vegetables like high nutritional value, safe to consume, easily available, support local farmers, standard and chemical free as 49.4%, 47.1%, 25.9%, 31.8%, 30.6% and 37.1% respectively. The respondents are agreed towards support organic movement, environment friendly, high quality and freshness as 39.4%, 35.3%, 30.6% and 36.5% respectively. It is found from the analysis that majority (49.4%) of the respondents are strongly agreed towards influence of purchase decision of organic vegetables as high nutritional value.

### 7.3. Reasons for consuming organic vegetables

An attempt has been made to know the reasons for consuming the organic vegetables by the respondents. The details are furnished in the following table.

**TABLE 3**  
**Reasons for Consuming the Organic Vegetables**

Reasons	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Hygiene	55	32.4
Increase immune system	36	21.2
Nutritional value	40	23.5
Good functioning of nervous system	39	22.9
Total	170	100.0

It is inferred from the above table that 32.4 per cent of the respondents are consuming organic vegetables as it is hygiene, 21.2 per cent of the respondents are consuming as it increases the immune system, 23.5 per cent of the respondents are consuming organic vegetables as it has nutritional value and 22.9 per cent of the respondents consuming organic vegetables as good functioning of nervous system. Majority (32.4%) of the respondents are consuming organic vegetables as it is hygiene to the body.

### 7.4. Consumer preference towards organic vegetables

In order to examine the relationship between the selected demographic variables of consumers and their influence to purchase organic vegetables, the hypotheses was framed and analyzed with the help of analysis of variance.

**TABLE 4**  
**Gender and Influence to Purchase Organic Vegetables**

	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	'p' value
Between groups	0.004	1	0.004	0.024	0.878 <sup>NS</sup>
Within groups	26.882	168	0.160		
Total	26.886	169			

NS: Not significant

It is noted that the 'p' value is greater than 0.05, Hence, the null hypothesis is accepted. There is no significant difference in mean influence to purchase organic vegetables among the male and female consumers.

**TABLE 5**  
**Age and Influence to Purchase Organic Vegetables**

	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	'p' value
Between groups	1.344	3	0.448	2.911	0.036**
Within groups	25.542	166	0.154		
Total	26.886	169			

\*\* Significant at 5 % level

From the above analysis, it is noted that the 'p' value is lesser than 0.05 and so null hypothesis is rejected. It is found that there is a significant difference in mean influence to purchase organic vegetables among the respondents of different age groups.

**TABLE 6**  
**Educational Qualification and Influence to Purchase Organic Vegetables**

	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	'p' value
Between groups	0.445	3	0.148	0.932	0.427 <sup>NS</sup>
Within groups	26.441	166	0.159		
Total	26.886	169			

NS: Not Significant

It is observed from the above analysis that the 'p' value is greater than 0.05 and so null hypothesis is accepted. It is found that there is a significant difference in mean influence to purchase organic vegetables among the respondents with different educational qualifications.

**TABLE 7**  
**Family Monthly Income and Influence to Purchase Organic Vegetables**

	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	'p' value
Between groups	0.880	3	0.293	1.872	0.136 <sup>NS</sup>
Within groups	26.006	166	0.157		
Total	26.886	169			

NS: Not Significant

From the above analysis, it is noted that the 'p' value is greater than 0.05 and so null hypothesis is accepted. It is found that there is no significant difference in mean influence to purchase organic vegetables among the respondents belonging to varied family income groups.

**TABLE 8**  
**Marital Status and Influence to Purchase Organic Vegetables**

	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	'p' value
Between groups	0.000	1	0.000	0.003	0.959 <sup>NS</sup>
Within groups	26.886	168	0.160		
Total	26.886	169			

NS: Not Significant

From the above analysis, it is noted that the 'p' value is greater than 0.05 and so null hypothesis is accepted. It means there is no significant difference in mean influence to purchase organic vegetables among the married and unmarried consumers.

**TABLE 9**  
**Period of Consuming and Influence to Purchase Organic Vegetables**

	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	'p' value
Between groups	0.182	3	0.061	0.378	0.769 <sup>NS</sup>
Within groups	26.704	166	0.161		
Total	26.886	169			

NS: Not Significant

From the above analysis, it is noted that the 'p' value is lesser than 0.05 and so null hypothesis is rejected. It means that there is a significant difference in mean influence to purchase organic vegetables among the respondents belonging to different period of consuming organic vegetables.

## 8. Findings

1. Most of the respondents are agriculturists and they have preferred to use eco-friendly products and the minimum respondents are having retail stores and they have preferred to use eco-friendly products.
2. Out of twelve, five variables were closely associated with the consumer attitude towards eco friendly products.
3. The respondents who belong to above 60 years, male respondents, respondents who educated with school level and urban respondents are having highest level of consumer attitude towards eco friendly products.

## 9. Recommendations

1. The marketers and firms should create awareness about the benefit of using the products for environment and human life through it can be increased the attitude of eco friendly product among youngsters, female respondents and respondents live in rural and sub urban areas. It is recommended to the retailers and marketers to need to raise public awareness and usage of the importance of eco friendly products in the study area.
2. Marketers and producers should develop their product and services according to the genuine need of the customers because merely producing the eco friendly products is not enough rather that must be well suited to the reality of customers' need.

## 10. Conclusion

The present research focused to examine the consumer preference towards organic vegetables in Dharmapuri district. Organic vegetables are most preferred and highly demanded. The commodities at present and the price of organic products are higher than other traditional food products. But, quality characteristics affect consumers' preferences for organic food products; with the most important including health and nutritional value, taste and fresh and general appearance. Consumers' willingness to purchase is influenced by limited and erratic supply, higher price of the products and very limited access and information.

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