

Exploring Farmers' and Consumers' Perceptions and Preferences about Organic Food Products in Indore

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ABSTRACT

Purpose- In the present study, we review and discuss the factors, which affect the change in the consumer behavior towards organic food. The primary purpose of this study is to know the factors which helps in shaping consumer's and farmers decision about organic food buying and production respectively.

Methodology- The present paper is divided into two segments one for consumers another for farmers. To study consumer's perception quantitative study was conducted. For the purpose of the study, a sample size of 100 was selected by random sampling and the data was tested statistically with a T-test later with the help of charts, the results were inferred. Likewise to know farmer's perception qualitative study was done by rigorous literature review.

Result- The results depict that on consumer's part nutritional value plays an important role in immunity and individual health and further it was also found to be connected with availability, price, social status, knowledge, and many more. Likewise in case of farmers mainly social, environmental and costing part having high impact on the farmer's mind.

Limitation- The limitation of this study is that consumer's and farmer's perception can be understood in a more better way by conducting quantitative study with high sample size.

Future Scope- This study can be further extended by covering more demographic area to know the overall problems and scope for both the parties consumer and farmers.

Key words: Organic Products, Nutritional food, socio-demographic, Eco-label, Immunity.

1. INTRODUCTION

The majority of the changes that have hindered delayed social and economic development in recent years have to do with the environmental movement, health, and quality of life; this trend can be seen in the consumer mobilization through organic values. Because of this, it is now more clear than ever that socioeconomic development and a values-driven perspective regarding the environment, food quality, and health are associated.

In today's world population is growing at a rapid rate and getting good and healthy food is becoming a challenge. Organic food is an option which can fulfill this rising demand for customers. Organic farming

products are grown within an agricultural framework that restricts farmers from utilizing harmful chemicals, artificial preservatives, and different pesticides. The basic concern here is about an individual look out for health, nutrition and respective farming practices. It is a growing concern with reference to type of treatment offered to crops while production as well as taking care of further chemical processing in some of them. There are many grocery items as pulses, rice, wheat etc that are been polished and processed to be marketed with respective brand. Here are various activities which takes place after cultivation and harvesting of organic grain.

Labelling- 100 % Organic(100% organic ingredients except water and salt), Organic(95% or more organic ingredients), Made with Organic (70% organic ingredients except water and salt), Specific Organic Ingredient Listings.

Marketing- Product, Price, Place, Promotion.

This approach is helpful in fulfilling environmental and social responsibility. This practice contributes to healthier environment, preservation of soil, regenerating and reproductive abilities of soil and its management are serious concern.

Organic agriculture is a way of farming which mainly focuses on cultivating land and raising crops in such a manner that prioritizes well being of soil. It can be achieved by utilizing Organic wastes and biological materials along with beneficial bio-fertilizers to nourish crops resulting in enhanced sustainable production within an environment friendly setting.

The increasing awareness about health, food safety, and environmental and social issues has led to a substantial rise in the demand for eco-friendly products, including organic foods (Loureiro et al., 2001; Nair, 2005; Briz and Ward, 2009). Numerous studies have explored consumers' awareness, knowledge, perception, and behavior towards organic food in both developed and developing nations (Chakrabarti, 2007; Compagnoni et al., 2000; Cunningham, 2002).

Level of awareness and knowledge play a crucial role in shaping consumers' attitudes and perceptions towards organic foods, consequently high growth in the organic food markets (Soler et al., 2008; Freeland-Graves and Nitzke, 2002). Jain and Kaur (2004) noted that Indian people knows the importance of environmental conservation, which they associated with "Green Products." These products, prepared from recycled materials having less/non toxic characteristics with least packaging, are gaining popularity because of their least impact on the environment. In developed countries consumers are highly aware and knowledgeable. Consumption of organic food is high in developed countries as compared to developing countries. In India organic food marketing is at early growing stage which results in low level of availability of product, outlets, awareness and knowledge among customers (Squires, 2001). likewise, social dynamics and movements like the COVID-19 pandemic and ethical consumption have the power to shape dietary practices and the formation specific values, modifying consumers' attitudes and perceptions of food consumption. Using organic food can serve as one way to address the issues of sustainable consumption and food waste that are getting more apparent in today's society. Now a days Consumers are going for organic food over conventional food because of its unique quality which helps individual in maintaining good health (Chinnici et al., 2002; Harper and Makatouni, 2002; O'Donovan and McCarthy, 2002; Radman, 2005). Despite this positive perception, the market

size for organic foods has remained limited due to constraints on both the producer and consumer sides. Although individuals seek healthy and nutritious options for their food plates, but many of consumers have no idea about its outlet. Supply of organic food is not adequate, customer do not get leafy vegetables as it is sold out within 3-4 hours (Magnusson et al., 2001; Stefanic et al., 2001; Gil et al., 2000). The awareness about benefits of organic foods is increasing day by day and consumers may not want to pay extra for healthy organic fruits, vegetables, and other products. Overall, consumers maintain a positive perception of organic food's health benefits compared to conventional alternatives (Chinnici et al., 2002; Harper and Makatouni, 2002). The aim of our study was to analyze the factors influencing consumers' behavior regarding the purchase of organically grown food products in relation to the sociodemographic characteristics of our respondents and to ascertain growing concern about food consumption and its impact on health.

Ensuring about the food safety for both human well-being and environmental preservation, as well as considering sensory qualities like taste, nutritional content, freshness, and visual appeal, play a crucial role in designing the preferences of consumers of organic food.

Furthermore, the research could additionally demonstrate informative to producers of organic food in order to comprehend consumer demands and modify production accordingly. The major players in this sector might discover this research relevant as they get more involved in boosting the production and consumption of organic products, and this would benefit the local community on all three fronts.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

In the past decade, the organic food sector has emerged as one of the most rapidly expanding segments within the food industry. Organic food encompasses products derived from agricultural practices that steer clear of synthetic fertilizers, pesticides, hormones, genetically modified organisms, and irradiation.

Arya (2009) identified that Organic food is not much popular among customers and for the same it becomes necessary to spread the knowledge and information about outlets and products for a better decision making process.

Stolz, H., Stolze, M., Hamm, U., Janssen, M., & Ruto, E. (2011) the research outcome indicates that there is diversity among consumers in term of their preference. Some of the consumers are price sensitive and some are not. Consumers who are more influenced by price lean towards conventional food, while individuals who are less influenced by price, they go for organic products.

Paul, J., & Rana, J. (2012) examined that the factors that influence the intent of consumer to buy organic food includes following like health concern, accessibility, and demographic factors. The overall satisfaction that consumers report towards organic food product is higher than non organic foods although these levels vary with time and other influencing factors. The study suggests that marketer can develop effective strategies to influence the consumers in a positive way towards organic food products.

Buder, F., Feldmann, C., & Hamm, U. (2014) in their study suggested primary factors as product quality, limited availability of product and price consideration. The result of the product specific analysis

highlights that significance of these reasons varies from product to product and specific category of store in the market.

Kumar, S. A. D., & Chandrashekar, H. M. (2015) point out in their study that the availability of information about organic product plays a crucial role in advancing the production of organic farming in the country. Implementing the effective marketing strategies to enhance the production is current requirement of the hour. According to the outcome of this research if both producer and government develop the marketing strategies and invest in promotions, subsidies for organic producer then it can lead to significant changes in Karnataka city. The demand of organic food is higher (especially in urban city) than its supply it results in limited selling of organic product.

Bhatia, V., & Panwar, S. (2016) findings reveal that consumer consider organically processed food healthy and safe for their body and those who are not consuming organic food are less informed or unaware about it and its benefits. The research underscores the important task for marketers to develop more strategies to differentiate it in the marketplace and to enhance awareness level among consumers.

LOPEZ, E., et al. (2017) analyzed that the Consumer in the market go for organic product because it is blend of both hedonic like as certification, Pleasure, enjoyment, economic factor etc. and ethical incentives like as trust, principles, beliefs etc. All these benefits are interconnected and influence each other.

M, S., & G, A. R. (2018) this research pointed out that maintaining good health holds immense role in our daily life. Organic foods are cultivated by using agricultural methods that exclude use of chemicals and harmful pesticides but with environmental friendly approaches. This paper points out the significant importance of marketing strategies and creating awareness about organic food. The organic food products are considered more superior than conventional food in term of health benefits. As a result organic food market is seen as a segment of growing market. Motivation behind purchase of organic food could be health concern, ecological influence, and human well being.

Bharath, C., & M, C. H. (2018) suggested that the market force cannot overlook the upward swift in demand for Organic product. It is more cost effective to design a new marketing strategy that meets requirement of a specific section of the market rather targeting an undifferentiated market. This is called a concentration strategy. Few companies go with multi-segment strategy, which involve different products, promotion methods, distribution channel, and price to serve to more than one market segment.

Sahu, R. K., & Mishra, R. K. (2018) gives an overview of recent studies that the preferences of consumers regarding organic foods. It's like perception or preferences towards the organic foods. The rise in level of awareness among consumers and also their concern for food safety, health and environment has resulted in a new rise in the consumption of organic food. The recognized health advantages of organic food have caused a surge in domestic demand for organic food products.

Parmar, S., & Sahrawat Dr, S. (2019) study shows that individual goes for organic product to secure their health, quality of product, and some sensory elements like taste and consistency. Preference extended to various categories like beauty product, edibles, attire etc. However there is shortage of availability and varieties in the market.

Aitken, R., Watkins, L., Williams, J. and Kean, A. (2020) their study revealed that enhancing product labeling systems with additional information regarding the environmental, health, and societal advantages of the item, can boost consumers' perceived ability to make informed choices and will enhance their willingness to buy organic products.

Premjith, S. (2017) stated in their research about consideration of food consumption pattern and for the same improving the respective agricultural practice for the native crops. Further an urgent requirement of nutrition concern was also highlighted.

Thomas, G, and Tavernier, D (2017) examined in their study about benefits of organic farming in term of revenue generation compared to those who aren't using organic seeds. They also studied that farmers using organic seed and methods of cultivation require less pesticides and it also helps in cost cutting and in increasing profits.

Mohammad Altarawneh (2013) explored about some important factors which are crucial for enhancing the demand of organic food product. Like consumer's education level, income, health consciousness, and most importantly availability of product. On the other side the study found a suggestion for the marketers that they should organize some consumer awareness program about the product and also promote education among consumers then only they can grab full opportunities which prevails in the market.

Researchers Mudaliar S.L. and Vedhavalli (2012) conducted a research on the consumers of bangalore city which reveals that consumer's gender also has positive impact on buying of organic food. Also they found that buyer compare product's quality according to its price.

Farah Ayuni Shafie and Denise Rennie's (2009) studied that consumers buying behaviour is influenced by their senses like taste, its appearance, freshness, and smell also their concern about environment and health. Their study also found that its high price is the reason of its low consumption of organic food.

3. RATIONALE OF THE STUDY:

The purpose behind this study is to understand the reasons behind the preference of consumers for organic products with the help of primary data and to understand the farmers perception about organic food with the help of literature review. This study also identified the factors which influence and affect the purchase of organic foods by consumer. Firstly we need to know their perception about the organic food which may be affected by nutritional knowledge of the consumers, their need, buying behavior and lifestyle and other factor which shape the behaviour and decision of organic food consumer.

Likewise in developing nations managers can invest into the growing interest among consumers for nutritious food choices and aiming for improving immune system by going organic. Moreover, accelerating consumer awareness through organic food events, social gatherings, farmers' markets, promotional efforts, and advertising is more of purpose driven as it tackles concerns related to trust, food safety, origin, and traceability. It has been observed that by using social media and personal influence marketers can speed up the adoption of organic food products. The impact of socio-demographic, product-related factor and consumer psychographics carries more weight in comparison to supply-related factor. Furthermore, farmers are having different opinion about organic farming. Also to find which factor play significant role in shaping their attitude and perception about organic food.etc is the main purpose of this study..

3. Research Methodology

This study is divided in two parts i} From the consumer's point of view ii} From farmer's point of view.

For the part one to achieve the aim of the research, an online survey was conducted in Dec 2024 among residents from Madhya Pradesh. A total number of 118 responses were collected administered with the help of Google forms, out of which 100 were validated for the current research since the respondents declared that they were consuming organic products. The responses were recorded on 5 point likert scale format with choice per items ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree". The research instrument mainly consisted of 2 main sections: (i) factors affecting organic food products consumption; (ii) socio-demographic characteristics.

This study was conducted in Indore through purposive sampling. For the purpose of the study a sample size of 100 was approached by random sampling out of which 89 samples were used. The data thus collected was tested with the help of t-test to find the significant difference between the means of the samples. In the later part the results were discussed with the help of various attributes. Further suggestions are provided for handling the issues.

For second part qualitative study was done based on some review of literature. Studies those were conducted in the same demographic area are being taken into the account for analysis purpose.

Research Objectives: The major objective of the current study was to know the consumers' perception about organic products, as well as to identify the main factors which are influencing the consumption of organic products. Also, we examined the impact of factors which basically influence the farmers perception in adopting organic farming techniques.

Further objective of the study is to study the farmers' perception of organic farming by providing answers to the following research questions:

1. What are the major crops grown by the farmers?
2. What are farmers 'attitude and perception about organic farming?
3. What are the factors that contribute to formation of attitude and perception about organic farming?

4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

| Influencing Factor | Average value | Mean | Rank |
|--|---------------|------|------|
| Organic products are more nutritious than conventional product ? | 4.01 | | 2 |
| Organic products are safer than conventional food. | 4.02 | | 1 |
| Organic products are easily available. | 2.82 | | 15 |

| | | |
|---|----------|----|
| Packaging of the food influences purchase decision. | 3.54 | 7 |
| Do you think Organic products are traditional? | 3.49 | 10 |
| Organic food are trendy? | 3.5 | 9 |
| Organic food are Elite? | 3.1 | 12 |
| Organic foods are affordable. | 2.9 | 16 |
| Is there any variation among price of organic foods sold by local store and by brand specific store ? | 3.51 | 8 |
| Are you conscious about nutrition? | 3.78 | 4 |
| Post covid health complication has led to prompt buying of organic foods? | 3.58 | 7 |
| Post Covid-19 what health related issues are you facing | 3 | 13 |
| Do you think organic foods affects our health? | 2.98 | 14 |
| Does organic food helps to maintain your status in the society? | 2.98 | 14 |
| Do you prefer only those organic products which are standardized by government ? | 2.98 | 14 |
| Does branding and brand ambassador affects your purchase decision. | 2.95 | 15 |
| How privileged do you feel while consuming organic products ? | 3.51 | 8 |
| Does its Natural Flavor attracts you? | 3.67 | 5 |
| Cost of the Organic products. | 3.6 | 6 |
| Lack of availability in the market. | 3.78 | 4 |
| Lack of authenticity about organic product. | 3.58 | 7 |
| Knowledge about organic product. | 3.43 | 11 |
| How much you are satisfied with organic products? | 3.79 | 3 |
| What difficulties you face while buying organic products? | 2.634146 | 17 |

Table no.1

On the basis of table no. 1 Safety and health is major concern for individuals, consumer will go for the product which is safer for human health. Than nutritional value also plays major role in consumer buying decision related to food. Later on availability, price of the product, status, knowledge and many more factors takes place in decision making process.

5. A New Structure

In accordance with Section 5, customer views and actions regarding health have been found to be best predicted by health consciousness. The aspect of health promotes a positive view to consume organic food as a way of illness prevention (Groff et al., 1993). Organic food (Paul and Rana, 2012; Lane and

Bruhn, 1992; Shaharudin et al., 2010; Dickieson et al., 2009; Michael and Hassan, 2008). As thus, the healthcare sector can readily promote the use of organic food with this information. Further, many consumers base buying intentions on health consciousness, which has a positive association with their buying behavior and attitude. A study conducted in the Netherlands examined the health-related factors influencing organic food consumption and revealed that the frequency of buying affected both environmental and health motivations for purchasing organic products. Schifferstein and Oude Ouphuis (1997) observed that while "heavy" buyers gave greater attention to environmental concerns, "incidental" purchasers primarily cited health as their major motivation. By becoming more willing to pay regularly, heavy buyers indicated a stronger commitment towards the environment. As consequently, it has been suggested that organic consumer research put consumers according to how usually they make the purchases. Additionally,

| Topic of research | Citation | Important Factors |
|--|--|--|
| Quality, Safety and Consumer Behavior Toward Organic Food | Lucas et al. (2008) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality and safety • Health Conscious |
| Factors Influencing Purchasing Behavior of Organic Foods | Shamsolla et al.(2013) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge & Education • Environmental Concern • Health Consciousness • Demand is Price Inelastic. |
| Consumer Motivation to Buy Organic Food Depends on Lifestyle | Andrzej Soroka and Julia Wojciechowska-Solis | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Availability • Income • Health and safety |
| Determinants of Regular and Occasional Consumers' Intentions to Buy Organic Food | Pino et al. (2012) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ethical commitment • Food safety • Health recommendation |
| Effect of situations on the purchase intention and behavior | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Price • Ease of purchase • High perceived prior knowledge • High levels of future |

| | | |
|---|-----------------------------|--|
| | | orientation |
| Purchase Behavior and Influence of Socio Economic Factors with reference to Organic Food Products | Santhi et al. (2007) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health • Food habit of respondent • Marital status |
| Attitudes and behavior toward organic products: an exploratory study | Tsakiridou et al. (2008) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge about organic food • Labelling and certification • Health • Animal welfare • Environmental Concern |
| An extension of the benefit segmentation base for the consumption of organic foods. | Gad Mohsen and Dacko (2013) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High perceived prior knowledge • High levels of future orientation |

Another major reason for and primary driver of the development of a good customer opinion of organic food is environmental concern (Brugarolas Mollá-Bauzá et al., 2005; Makatouni, 2002; Valerian et al. (2011); Smith and Paladino, 2009). Environmentalists, individuals and non-governmental organizations can use the results of this review as the foundation for their arguments.

To create a better organic food market, they could focus on key areas such as the distribution system, supply chain, giving farmers the tools and technical know-how they need, and acquiring government certification. We break down the factors influencing people's views toward organic food into three categories based on the review's findings: very important, important, and less important. Organic food production is not gaining traction despite rising demand because farmers lack the resources and knowledge needed to protect what they grow.

6. FARMERS' PERCEPTION OF ORGANIC FARMING

In 1980, Ajzen and Fishbein developed the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA). This theory is based on the assumption that people are usually rational, using the information at their fingertips carefully, thinking about the effects of their actions, and acting sensibly. A person's intentions, which are shaped by their state of mind and perceived social pressure, are the best indicators of their actions, according to TRA. Thus, a theoretical framework for exploring how attitudes and goals influence volitional behaviors was made available through the TRA (Willock et al. 1999). To improve the TRA, the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) was developed. To allow for any possible constructing or inspiring factors that may affect an attempted action being carried out, the perceived behavioral control extension was added as a new component to the TRA (Beedell and Rehman, 2000). according to the TPB, a person's behavior can

be affected by their views, perceived behavioral control, goals and intentions, and norms of society (Bergevot et al. 2004). According to Patidar, S., & Patidar, H. (2015) low practice of organic farming. This gap between knowledge or perception and practice can be bridged by better understanding the system and government provision of enabling environments (e.g. provision of credit facilities, training on technicalities) to farmers. This finding suggests that the communities will have a high adoption rate of innovations related to organic farming and other agricultural policies. The major crops which are grown in the Madhya Pradesh's Malwa-Nimar region are basically include mustard , wheat, jowar (sorghum), chickpeas, , cotton, and a variety of pulses, soybean. Because soybeans are suited to the climate and soil conditions in this region, they are among the most widely grown organic crops.

The study identified positive view of organic farming with significant relationships between age, educational background, farm size, benefits of organic farming, and social factors. Where as gender, knowledge, cost factor of the and Environmental aspects do not have significant impact on farmers attitude towards organic.

7. IMPLICATIONS FOR MANAGERS AND TACTICS FOR RETAILERS

It is essential to talk about the marketing and retailing initiatives associated with organic food. To a large degree, these activities will depend on the retailer's brand, store size, layout, cost, and availability of organic food in specific areas. On the supply side, O'Donovan and McCarthy (2002) believed that consumers like organic food mainly because of its accessibility. This is because of the fact typically only acquire a particular food if it is regularly available. The factors leading consumers to select organic food over conventionally grown food have been discussed by several of authors (Midmre et al., 2005). Additionally, retailers have the ability to establish exclusive outlets for high-income consumers who prefer to shop at exclusive stores. Regarding this promotion, word-of-mouth advertising can be a highly successful marketing strategy.

It can be costly to run ads. It is important to identify opinion leaders and reference groups because they have a lot of sway and can persuade a lot of people to live more sustainably. Since the market for organic food is still innovative, growing market, the retailers must have think about this factor while developing their marketing plan. Marketers can create retention strategies that change their regular customers into devoted ones. Managers will also benefit from our findings as they develop their promotion plans. Further, Ansoff (1957) and Danneels (2002) contend that sellers usually require to make extra efforts to market new products in new markets. Retail outlets may display certificates for authentic organic food. Since small retailers may find it difficult long-term advantages in terms of credibility and goodwill can be generated (Tsakiridou et al., 1999). Further, it will benefit related sectors like packaging. Marketing managers can target potential consumers by applying the research's insights to determine their market segments. This information can be used by farmers and those who wish to create a cooperative society for the production of organic food.

8. SCOPE OF FURTHER RESEARCH:

The review suggested future research can be done on finding the reason of low purchase of organic food even after consumers are aware about their health. There is a need of research to know the marketing strategies which can be adopted by the seller to avoid the current problem of adoption and then availability. A research gap has been found very less is been conducted from the farmers point of view.

And no researcher have explored the area like why farmers are not adopting fully organic farming techniques.

9. SUGGESTIONS:

Indian government should take proper steps to make people aware about the organic food and make them realized how organic food is more beneficial for their health. For that government can implement various training program, campaign etc. and must take strict check on their implementation.

10. CONCLUSION:

Organic farming is richer in nutrition, more safe and eco-friendly, as compared to non organic food. Result shows that female consumers are more health conscious as compared to male consumers as they are frequent buyer of Organic product. Various factor influence the purchase decision of consumer but majorly price, health benefits, awareness, and availability are major factors.

At present India is the world's largest organic producers (Willer and Lernoud, 2019) and with this aim, we can conclude that appreciating organic farming in India can make a nutritionally, ecologically, and economically healthy country in the future.

It was also found that majorly research have been conducted in developed nations while in developing countries there are very few researches have been conducted. The result of their study shoes that consumer are more aware and knowledgeable in developed countries as compare to the consumer of developing countries. In India there is still need to carry out awareness programs, campaign to promote organic farming (also by providing various schemes and subsidies) (C., Razali, Z., & Santhirasegaram, V.2016).

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