

# Organic food products: An analysis of factors affecting the buying behaviour

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## Abstract

Consumer behavior being one of the most challenging areas in marketing focuses on the purchasing, consuming and using products and services. Consumer Behavior is largely impacted by social, psychological, cultural and personal factors. In the recent years the trend towards the consumption of organic foods has grown largely. Organic Foods have been long considered to be more nutritious, health and ecologically sound compared to ordinary foods. Although, Organic Foods come for a price which is expensive than any other conventional foods, people are ready to pay the extra amount. The study aims to analyze the factors that influence that buying behavior of a consumer when s/he purchases an organic food product. This study uses independent t-test, ANOVA techniques to confirm the results from the data that has been collected. According to this study, price, subjective norms, and understanding of health issues are some of the elements that have a significant impact on how consumers feel about buying organic food. Other than the confirmed factors 'availability' is another factor that affects the consumer attitude. One can infer from the obtained results that these factors not only influence buyers point of view towards the organic food but it also influences the buying behavior of the consumer. Additionally, age, education, and income are some of the key elements that affect real purchasing behaviour. This research also help to better understand how consumers feel about the organic food business as a whole and their purchasing habits and intentions. The findings of the study have their suggestions for the market's merchants, regulatory bodies, and organic food industry businesses. Towards the end, this research comes up with instructions and recommendations for marketers and merchants who work with organic goods and want to grow the organic food sector.

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## 1. Introduction

The rise in environmental awareness, demand and willingness to pay for Organic Foods has given rise to corporate interest in organic food industry which has led to initiation of major changes and innovations. With the growth in organic product market, this enhanced awareness and willingness of the consumer amounts for a thoughtful effect and influences his purchasing behavior in the market. When it comes to new marketing trends, the rise of the organic business is considered as a component since it encourages consumers to seek for the quality and other advantages of organic products before making a purchase.

The increase in population has led to major downfalls in the agriculture sector. It was very difficult to satisfy the needs and desires of the increasing population. To overcome this situation "green revolution" was launched to help the sector with technological advancements, rising agricultural output to fulfill the growing population's need for food. The Green Revolution although, being a positive reform had its negative impacts. Chemical pesticides and fertilizers are used to increase output, but they seriously harm the environment and public health.

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A sizable portion of consumers worldwide are worried about environmental issues. The attitude or behavior of a consumer who is sensitive to the environment is influenced as to how a manufacturing, processing and brand of a product might affect the environment. Consumers are now aware of the environmental degradation and are now even more conscious towards purchasing what is said to be efficient and effective, in this case organic products, thus favoring the companies that comply with the environmental data. This study aims to investigate the elements that influence consumers' purchasing decisions. Understanding these variables is crucial for creating a marketing plan that will be successful in expanding India's domestic organic market.

## 2. Literature review

The results of the consensus of global study present a clear picture of the factors that influence people's decisions to purchase organic food items. Health, product quality, and concern for environmental degradation are some of the variables that emerge as most prevalent in the respective order of priority, even though there are some discrepancies in the order of preferences in a particular culture and demographic factors. These claims have been previously supported decades ago and have also been backed by numerous additional studies.

(ACNielsen, 2006) says that Indians are among the top 10 global consumers of foods with health supplements, but they cannot get organic food goods. (Chakrabarti and Baisya, 2007, 2009) further in his study provides that although Indian market of Organic Products is still in a nascent stage, the relevant personality components, related dimensions, and important buying motivations and attitudes have been found by a number of researchers, and they may be usefully employed in consumer surveys to explain purchase behavior in an environmentally friendly category like organic food.

Positivity toward organic products is significant because, as (Harper and Makatouni, 2002) and (Chinnici et al., 2002) have noted, consumers' belief that organic products are healthier than conventional alternatives influences their decision to purchase them. Similarly, (Vermeir and Verbeke, 2004) discovered that buying organic products was not solely motivated by environmental concerns; other factors that may have an impact on behaviour include health concerns, belonging to a social group, the desire to stand out from others, and the desire to experiment with newer technologies.

The Asia Pacific regions, especially in developing nations like India and China, have a persistently strong consumer belief that organic foods are healthier than conventional foods. Consumers in western, eastern market are well aware of numerous benefits that organic products have to offer. (Letourneau et al., 1996; Cayuela et al., 1997) shows that people believe that foods grown organically have lower levels of microbiological and chemical contamination than those farmed conventionally. This remains a perception as one can understand by the following example: sometimes interrogated factors include the potential for contamination during processing and the mixing of conventional and organic goods in the food supply chain. Due to the increased usage of agricultural manure, there may potentially be organic foods that are at a higher risk of microbial contamination than conventional foods. Salmonella and E. Coli. However, this situation can be managed with the help of proper management practices.

## 3. Research Methodology

### 3.1. Objectives of the study

1. To examine and acknowledge the actual buying behavior of consumers in the Organic Food Industry.
2. To discuss the challenges for the Indian Organic Food Market.

In order to attain the objectives of the study, empirical data by way of structured questionnaire has been collected; the questionnaire has been formulated taking into account previous studies such as Gil et al. (2000) Gracia and de Magistris (2007), Chen (2009), Chakrabarti (2010) and Effendi et al. (2015). Questions formulated for the purpose were based on the 5-point scale. The socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents were recorded while taking into account factors like gender, age, education level, occupation, and income.

### 3.2. Sample and data collection procedure

The locations of all one-to-one surveys were department stores and organic food outlets. that have sections for organic foods in the city of the Ludhiana, Punjab. Random sampling method has been used in order to conduct surveys i.e. by interacting with customers who were leaving grocery stores, malls, and food festivals. Only the respondents who were aware of organic foods were distributed the questionnaires. A total of 200 respondents out of the 250 questionnaires distributed participated in the survey.

### 3.3. Data analysis

In order to conduct statistical analysis all the responses given by the respondents were thoroughly check and coded. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 24 has been used for analyzing the data. Cronbach's alpha method has been used to examine the scale reliability of the empirical data and consistency. The acquired data have been statistically analysed using methods including ANOVA, Factor Analysis, Independent T-test, Multiple Linear Regression, and Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analysis.

## 4. Results and Discussions

The description of the socio-demographics of the consumers were analysed and have been summarized in Table no. 1.1. The table indicates the results that around 53.5% of the consumers as per the survey were males while 46.5% were females. The majority of the responders were between the ages of 31 and 41; representing 29.5% of the sample respondents. As represented in the Table 1.1, Graduates (46.5%) and postgraduates (26.0%), as well as those with higher secondary education (12.50%), made up the bulk of the consumers.. The analysis of the sample provides that mostly respondents fall under the ₹ 30,000 to ₹50,000 per month income bracket and majority of respondents i.e. 51.39% belong to nuclear families (i.e. 3-4 members); closely followed by a further 40.0% living in one to two people households.

**Table 1.** Socio demographic profile of respondents

Variables	Non-Consumer/	Habitual Consume	Occasional Consumer	Total	Total
	Little Knowledge	Well - Informed	Well-Informed		Percentage
<b>Gender</b>					
Male	20	45	42	107	53.5
Female	15	50	28	93	46.5
<b>Age(In Years)</b>					
18-30	10	12	9	31	15.5
31-40	10	25	24	59	29.5
41-50	15	26	12	53	26.5
51-60	8	18	15	41	20.5
More than 60 years	7	4	5	16	8
<b>Household Size</b>					

1-2	10	55	15	80	40
3-4	35	46	22	103	51.5
More than equal to 5	4	8	5	17	8.5
<b>Education</b>					
High School	5	8	7	20	10
Secondary School	9	10	6	25	12.5
Graduation	21	55	17	93	46.5
Post Graduation	13	24	15	52	26
PHD	2	5	3	10	5
<b>Family Income</b>					
<10,000	4	11	5	20	10
10001-30000	9	15	7	31	15.5
30001-50000	7	27	8	42	21
50001-70000	8	11	14	33	16.5
70001-90000	10	16	12	38	19
More than 90000	9	21	6	36	18
<b>Occupation</b>					
Student	9	21	16	46	23

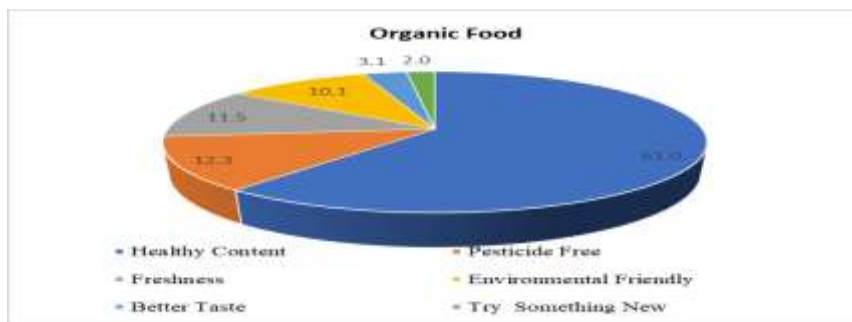
Employee	14	36	23	73	36.5
Professional	3	21	5	29	14.5
Self-Employed	3	23	3	29	14.5
Unemployed	5	14	4	23	11.5

#### 4.1 Reasons for purchasing organic food

People who had heard of "organic" goods were questioned about whether they had ever purchased them. 65.3% responded favorably, additional inquiries regarding their purchasing behavior were made from buyers. 52.0 percent of them purchase organic goods every week, 22.5 percent do so at least once a month, and 24.9 percent less frequently than that. As the primary justification for buying organic food, respondents identified 'healthy content' as their response. However, the majority of respondents are of the opinion that advantages such as healthful ingredients, a lack of pesticides or low residual levels, freshness, and environmental friendliness are important factors in choosing organic foods over conventional meals. (Fig. 1.1). A total of 67 percent of people says that in making a purchasing decision, healthy content plays an important role. This confirms reaction to earlier results in which interviewers identified nutritious content as the top individual justification for buying organic food (52%). Principal Component Analysis (PCA) approach with Varimax Rotation was used to identify the variables influencing a consumer's perception of organic foods. Data suitability was checked using Kaiser-Mayer-Olin (KMO) and Bartlett's sphericity test before factor analysis. The KMO sampling adequacy measure is 0.78, which exceeds the 0.60 suggested cut-off value.<sup>23</sup> The Bartlett's test of sphericity provided  $\chi^2 = 2068$ ,  $df = 110$ ,  $p = 0.00$  from which it can be inferred that the interitem correlations were sufficiently large for PCA. Thus, these statistical measures support the data factorability. Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha$ ) values for each of the components were more than the cutoff point of 0.70, assuring the dependability of the scale. (Nunnally, 1978).

**Table 2.** Constructs, Observable items and Factor Loadings

Construct	Indicator	Factor Loading	Cronbach's	Variance Explained
Health Consciousness (HC)	HC1	0.82	0.78	38.3
	HC2	0.73		
	HC3	0.72		
Knowledge of Organic Food Products (KOF)	KOF1	0.81	0.76	7.23
	KOF2	0.75		
	KOF3	0.71		
Subjective Norm (SN)	SN1	0.85	0.81	6.61
	SN2	0.79		
	SN3	0.71		
Perceived Price (PP)	PP1	0.77	0.77	5.23
	PP2	0.74		
Availability(A)	AV1	0.86	0.81	4.89
	AV2	0.81		
Attitude (AT)	AT1	0.78	0.82	3.81
	AT2	0.75		
	AT3	0.71		
Purchase Intention (PI)	PI1	0.78	0.79	3.21
	PI2	0.81		
	PI3	0.69		
Actual Buying Behavior (ABB)	ABB1	0.86	0.76	1.78



**Figure 1.** Organic Food

#### 4.2 Differences in the actual buying behaviour with respect to demographic variables

The Independent T-Test was used in this study to identify significant gender differences in the actual purchasing behavior of organic food products. As per statistics, more than 0.05 was the P- value (0.141) of the Levene's Gender Test, indicating that the variance is homogeneous. Therefore, in this research, the t-test for equal variance was used. 2-tailed significance (0.078), which is greater than 0.05, suggests as a rule of thumb that the difference is not statistically significant. The differences between the mean of 3.70 and 3.85 with the standard deviation of 0.58 and 0.47 for both sexes on actual buying behavior were not significant, according to the equal variance assumed. The findings confirm that both behaviors are directed at organic food products. The results of the One-Way ANOVA test show that the age of the respondent ( $F = 6.89$ , Sig. 0.000) had a major impact on the purchasing intent of organic food products. It's being supported. There was a statistically higher score on the purchasing behavior of organic food products compared to other age groups based on the results of the least significant difference (LSD) test for the respondent age group as shown in Table 1.3 in the age group 31- 40 years.

**Table 3.** Least Significant Difference (LSD)Test for Respondent's Age Group

Dependent Variable	Respondent's Age (in Years)	Mean Difference	Sig.
Actual Buying Behavior	18 – 30	0.37	0.012
	31 – 40	0.33	0.001
	51 – 60	0.39	0.000
	More than 60	0.42	0.001

Results show that the monthly income of the respondent ( $F=7.896$ , Sig. = 0.000) had a significant impact on the intention of purchasing organic food products. The results of the LSD test for monthly income of respondents ( $F = 8.932$ , Sig. = 0.000) showed that respondents with income levels higher than ₹ 50,000 per month had a statistically significant higher score on Actual purchase of organic food products from those lower than ~50,000 per month than respondents.

Statistical results show that the educational level of the respondent ( $F=8.124$ ; Sig.=0.000) had a major impact on the purchasing intent of organic food products. In addition, the results of the LSD Test for the educational level of the respondent ( $F = 8,054$ ; Sig = 0,000) showed that respondents holding a degree and master had a statistically significant higher score on the actual buying behavior of organic food products than respondents with a high school or intermediate qualification. The results of the LSD test show that holders of MPhil/PhD (Mean Difference = 0.601, Sig. = 0.001) had a statistically significant higher real purchase score than any other group of respondents.

### 5. Challenges in Indian Organic Food Market

There has been a sharp rise in demand for organic food products in the Indian market as a result of people's greater awareness of the benefits of eating quality and organic food. (Anamika Pandey, 2022)

People have innately recognized that health is the true form of wealth ever since the pandemic rocked the globe. In the Indian market, demand for organic food items has sharply increased due to people's growing awareness of the benefits of eating high-quality, organic foods.

We observe that consumers are choosing organic goods over conventional ones in favor of a better quality of life. However, the Indian market for organic food still has a ways to go. According to a survey, barely 1% of all organic produce is consumed in India, which is home to over 20% of the world's population. India, on the other hand, has the largest farmlands in the world. Given these facts and figures, it is clear that organic food items continue to encounter numerous obstacles on the Indian market.

**5.1 Limited Knowledge:** Organic food is still stigmatized in Indian society as a sign of luxury and status rather than as a standard. Many individuals believe it represents one's quality of life. Because of this, the word-of-mouth marketing strategy may have raised the profile of the phrase "organic," but more as a status symbol than as a sustainable solution. (www.businessworld)

**5.2 Making Decisions:** About a Lower Priced Product: Indian markets have price-sensitive clients with wide variations in their ability to spend their disposable cash. Therefore, even a small variation in food product costs

can cause someone to choose a less expensive alternative rather than one that is higher in quality and priced fairly. As a result, a sizable portion of the Indian diaspora chooses not to purchase organic food products. (Bezawada, R., & Pauwels, K., 2013)

*5.3 Unfriendly Retail Market:* Instead of taking a chance on giving shelf space to a less well-known organic product, retailers will always prefer to stock the shelves with a fast-moving, cheaper product. On the other hand, organic keyword makes the store concerned about their return on investment. As a result, there is a significant disconnect between the buyer and the seller of organic food in the Indian market. (Arnold, C. 2009).

*5.4 Traditional Farming Practices:* Chemical fertilizers have become all too familiar to Indian farmers. The majority of farmers avoid switching to an organic farming method out of concern that they might not see the same outcomes as they do with chemical fertilizer-based farming. (Reddy, B. S. 2010)

*5.5 Administrative Support:* At the moment, the governing bodies' subsidies for chemical fertilizers make them more affordable and accessible for the farming industry. Therefore, it is crucial to raise farmers' awareness of the advantages of organic farming while also providing them with the necessary administrative support. Along with this, a safety net of crop loss reimbursement and subsidies for organic farming will also aid in expanding India's market for organic foods. (Mikkelsen, B. E., & Sylvest, J., 2012)

*5.6 Understanding Demand and Supply Gaps:* There are times when the market has more organic food goods than there is demand, while the other, more in demand, organic food products has a shortage of supplies. For India's organic food industry to be balanced, this gap must be bridged and balanced. As an illustration, Uttar Pradesh has a higher demand than supply for jaggery powder. (Padel, S., & Foster, C, 2005)

The Indian market for organic food products still has a ways to go. We cannot, however, ignore the reality that over the past few years, consumers have become more aware of and interested in organic food items. Rural areas are affected as well, partly because everyone now understands the advantages of organic farming and living a healthy lifestyle thanks to increased access to knowledge. If the key issues are resolved in a timely manner, there is hope that the Indian market would not only see an increase in organic food goods but also innovation. The organic food market in India seems to be advancing gradually despite all of these obstacles, particularly since covid.

## 6. Conclusion

The main objective of this study is to examine the mechanism behind consumers' actual buying behavior towards organic food products. First, the study explores the factors influencing consumers' attitude towards organic foods. Second, the study provides the understanding of how influencing factors and attitude affect the purchase intention of consumers towards organic food products. Prior studies have reported that consumers' intention to purchase may not always convert into actual buying of organic foods. Prior studies have reported that the intention of consumers to buy may not always translate into the actual purchase of organic foods. The impact of socio-demographic variables on actual buying behavior is therefore also examined. Four factors (health awareness, knowledge of organic foods, subjective norms and perceived prices) that influence consumer attitudes towards organic food products have been revealed in the results. However, these four variables affect the intention to buy organic foods, along with one additional factor (i.e., availability). While making purchase-related decisions, the store location matters to customers.

Results show that the influencing factors, i.e., health awareness, knowledge of organic foods, subjective standards, perceived price and availability, positively affect the actual purchasing behavior, but the relationship mediates attitude and purchasing intention. As mentioned earlier, positive attitudes and buying intentions may not always lead to the actual purchase of organic food products, using independent t-test and ANOVA techniques to test the impact of sociodemographic factors (gender, age, income and education). The LSD test was used to see which group had the greatest difference in a demographic variable. The independent t-test results show that gender does not affect the actual purchase of organic products. Nonetheless, three other socio-demographic factors (age, income and education) have a major impact on actual buying behavior. Results from the LSD test show that young consumers in the 31-40 age group purchase more organic food products than any other age group. Another potential factor influencing real behavior towards organic foods is income. The results of the study show that high-income consumers are more likely to buy organic food. The results also indicate that highly educated customers prefer to buy more organic foods than less educated ones.

### *Finding & Suggestions:*

For organic product companies, retailers and market regulatory agencies, the results of this study have implications. Given consumer concerns about health and environmental concerns, an appropriate strategy needs to be developed. The strategy should focus on specific consumer segments, raising consumer awareness and



understanding of organic food products by preserving customer satisfaction and delight. Organic products are credential products, unless informed so, customers may not know whether a product is produced using organic or conventional methods.

The awareness and knowledge of consumers about organically produced food therefore plays a significant role in making purchasing-related decisions. This research provides guidance and suggestions for distributors who sell organic foods. In addition, the study may help organic food producers identify their target consumers by demonstrating the impact of socio- demographic factors on the purchase of organic foods. The study will provide insights for health and wellness companies to effectively reorient their production and marketing strategies to meet the growing demand for plans from customers. Findings indicate that organic food product marketers are carefully segmenting their market and framing their marketing planning and strategy to convince these potential customers of its benefits, such as healthy content, pesticide-free, freshness and environmentally friendly. Furthermore, consumers need to be informed about the availability of organic products, since consumers believe that the market for organic foods is limited.

Despite this study's significant results, there are some limitations that must be recognized when interpreting the results. First, only some selected factors were considered in the current study to examine the impact on consumer attitudes towards organic foods. Future research in this direction should incorporate factors such as advertising, regulation and distribution by the government while studying the attitude of consumers towards organic food products. Second, the study is being conducted in a vast country, India. In order to generalize the results, the sample size of 200 consumers may not be sufficient. Therefore, more studies with a high sample size should be conducted in this direction in order to extend the validity of the results.

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