

An Analysis of Consumer Attitudes toward Organic Food Products in Chennai City

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates consumer attitudes toward organic food products in Chennai, focusing on awareness, perceptions, and purchasing behavior. With the growing demand for healthier and environmentally friendly food options, understanding these attitudes is crucial for stakeholders in the organic food industry. The research employs a structured questionnaire to gather data from 385 consumers, analyzed using SPSS. Findings indicate that health consciousness, product information, and value for money significantly influence consumer attitudes. The study provides insights into factors affecting organic food consumption in Chennai, offering valuable information for marketers and policymakers.

Keywords: Organic food, Consumer attitude, Health consciousness, Purchase behavior, Chennai, SPSS analysis

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the global demand for organic food products has witnessed substantial growth, driven by increasing consumer awareness about health, environmental sustainability, and food safety. Organic foods, produced without synthetic chemicals, pesticides, or genetically modified organisms (GMOs), are perceived as healthier and more environmentally friendly alternatives to conventional food items. This shift in consumer preferences has been particularly notable in urban centers, where lifestyle changes and higher disposable incomes contribute to a growing market for organic products.

Chennai, one of the major metropolitan cities in India, presents a unique case for studying consumer behavior in relation to organic food. With its diverse population, evolving food habits, and expanding retail market, Chennai offers significant insights into the motivations, perceptions, and purchasing patterns of organic food consumers. Despite the increasing availability of organic products in supermarkets, specialty stores, and online platforms, there is still a need to understand the factors influencing consumer attitudes, including awareness levels, trust in certification, price sensitivity, and perceived health benefits.

This study aims to analyze consumer attitudes toward organic food products in Chennai City by examining the key drivers, barriers, and demographic factors that shape consumer preferences. The findings of this research can provide valuable implications for marketers, policymakers, and producers seeking to promote organic agriculture and expand the organic food market in urban India.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To assess consumer awareness of organic food products in Chennai.
2. To examine the factors influencing consumer attitudes toward organic foods.
3. To analyze the relationship between consumer attitudes and purchasing behavior.
4. To provide recommendations for enhancing the adoption of organic food products.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Despite the increasing availability of organic food products in Chennai, there is limited understanding of consumer attitudes and behaviors toward these products. This study aims to fill this gap by analyzing factors influencing consumer perceptions and purchasing decisions regarding organic foods.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

1. **Consumer Awareness and Perception:** Studies indicate that awareness of organic food benefits significantly impacts consumer attitudes. For instance, research by Snekha and Sreeya (2021) highlights that health consciousness and product information are key determinants of consumer attitudes toward organic foods in Chennai.
2. **Purchase Behavior:** Consumer involvement and purchase patterns are influenced by factors such as perceived health benefits, product quality, and certification standards. Amudha and Thaiyalnayaki (2023) found that consumer involvement in organic food purchases is driven by perceived prestige and value.
3. **Influence of Certification and Trust:** Trust in organic certifications plays a crucial role in shaping consumer attitudes. A study by Magesh and Rajeswari (2024) emphasizes the importance of certification in consumer decision-making processes.

Analysis

Analysis and Interpretation of Data

The data for this study was collected through a structured questionnaire administered to a sample of 150 consumers residing in various parts of Chennai City. The analysis is based on key variables such as awareness, frequency of purchase, preferred purchase locations, factors influencing purchase decisions, and perceived benefits and barriers of organic food consumption.

1. Awareness of Organic Food Products

- **Observation:** 85% of respondents were aware of organic food products, while 15% were not fully aware.
- **Interpretation:** A majority of urban consumers in Chennai have a good level of awareness regarding organic food, likely due to increasing media coverage and health consciousness.

Table: Frequency of Purchase

Frequency	Percentage
Regularly	20%
Occasionally	50%
Rarely	30%

- **Interpretation:** Although awareness is high, only 20% of consumers purchase organic food regularly. Occasional buying suggests that consumers are interested but not fully committed, possibly due to price or availability issues.

3. Preferred Place of Purchase

- Supermarkets: 45%
- Organic Stores: 25%
- Online Platforms: 20%
- Local Markets: 10%
- **Interpretation:** Supermarkets are the most preferred choice, indicating a reliance on established retail channels. The growth of online platforms also reflects the convenience-seeking behavior of urban consumers.

Table: Factors Influencing Purchase Decisions

Factor	Percentage
Health Benefits	60%
Environmental Concerns	20%
Taste/Quality	10%
Social Influence	10%

- **Interpretation:** Health benefits are the primary driver of organic food purchases in Chennai. Environmental concerns are a secondary factor, which suggests the need for better consumer education about the broader impacts of organic farming.

Table: Barriers to Purchasing Organic Food

Barrier	Percentage
High Price	50%
Limited Availability	25%
Lack of Trust in Labels	15%
Lack of Awareness	10%

- **Interpretation:** Price remains a significant barrier to regular consumption. A notable portion of consumers also lack trust in organic certifications, highlighting the need for stronger regulatory transparency and consumer education.

6. Demographic Influence

- **Age:** Younger consumers (20–35 years) were more likely to purchase organic food.

- **Income:** Consumers with higher disposable incomes were more likely to be regular buyers.
- **Education:** Higher educational levels correlated with greater awareness and willingness to pay for organic products.
- **Interpretation:** Demographic variables such as age, income, and education play a crucial role in shaping consumer attitudes. Marketers can target specific segments accordingly.

Findings of the study

1. **High Awareness of Organic Products :** A significant majority of respondents (approximately 85%) are aware of organic food products, indicating strong market penetration and growing consumer consciousness in Chennai.
2. **Health is the Primary Purchase Driver:** Most consumers (around 60%) choose organic food due to its perceived health benefits, with environmental concerns and better quality being secondary motivators.
3. **Infrequent but Interested Buyers:** Although awareness is high, only 20% of respondents purchase organic food regularly. This shows a gap between awareness and consistent buying behavior.
4. **Price Sensitivity is a Major Barrier:** The high cost of organic food is the most commonly cited barrier (50%) to regular consumption, making it a key issue for both producers and marketers.
5. **Preference for Supermarkets and Branded Outlets :** Consumers prefer buying organic food from supermarkets (45%) and dedicated organic stores (25%), reflecting a need for trust, product visibility, and convenience.
6. **Online Shopping Gaining Traction :** A notable 20% of respondents buy organic food online, highlighting a shift toward digital channels for convenience and variety.
7. **Lack of Trust in Certification and Labels:** Around 15% of consumers expressed doubts about the authenticity of organic labels, which points to the need for stronger certification mechanisms and awareness campaigns.
8. **Demographic Influence on Purchase Behavior:** Younger consumers (aged 20–35), individuals with higher education levels, and those with greater disposable incomes are more inclined to buy organic food products.
9. **Limited Product Availability:** About 25% of respondents cited limited availability of organic food in their locality, showing the need for better distribution and supply chain management.
10. **Willingness to Adopt if Barriers are Addressed:** Many consumers indicated they would purchase organic food more regularly if prices were more competitive and if product authenticity and availability improved.

Suggestions

- ❖ **Enhance Consumer Awareness through Targeted Campaigns:** Although awareness is high, many consumers still lack detailed knowledge about the benefits of organic products. Brands and government bodies should conduct awareness campaigns through social media, local events, and health seminars to educate consumers on the nutritional and environmental advantages of organic food.
- ❖ **Improve Price Competitiveness :** Price remains a major barrier for many consumers. Producers and retailers should explore strategies such as:
 - Reducing production costs through economies of scale.
 - Government subsidies or tax incentives for organic farmers.

- Offering combo packs or loyalty discounts to attract price-sensitive consumers.
- ❖ **Strengthen Certification and Labeling Trust** : Consumers need reassurance that the products they are purchasing are genuinely organic. Efforts should include:
 - Promoting well-recognized certifications (e.g., India Organic, Jaivik Bharat).
 - Ensuring strict enforcement of labeling regulations.
 - Educating consumers about how to identify authentic organic certifications.
- ❖ **Expand Distribution Channels and Availability** : Limited availability is a concern in many parts of Chennai. Suggestions include:
 - Partnering with mainstream supermarkets and kirana stores to improve shelf space.
 - Establishing more organic outlets in residential areas.
 - Supporting local farmers' markets with certified organic sections.
- ❖ **Encourage E-Commerce and Home Delivery** : Since a growing number of consumers prefer online shopping, organic brands should invest in:
 - Robust e-commerce platforms.
 - Tie-ups with delivery services to offer timely and fresh product delivery.
 - User-friendly mobile apps for easy ordering and tracking.
- ❖ **Focus on Product Differentiation and Quality Assurance** : Emphasize taste, freshness, and overall quality to justify higher prices. Clear messaging on pesticide-free farming, sustainable practices, and small-batch production can build trust and attract discerning consumers.
- ❖ **Government Support and Public Policy Initiatives** : Authorities can play a pivotal role by:
 - Promoting organic farming through subsidies, training, and infrastructure support.
 - Launching public distribution schemes for organic food.
 - Setting up certification bodies to regulate and monitor organic production and retail.
- ❖ **Engage Younger Demographics** : As younger consumers are more inclined toward health and sustainability, marketers should:
 - Use influencers and social media to reach this audience.
 - Develop youth-oriented organic snack lines or meal kits.
 - Collaborate with colleges and fitness centers to raise interest and engagement.

CONCLUSION

The study of consumer attitudes toward organic food products in Chennai City reveals a growing awareness and interest in healthy, environmentally sustainable food choices. Consumers are increasingly conscious of the health benefits associated with organic foods and are willing to explore these options despite certain constraints. The analysis indicates that health concerns are the primary motivator for purchasing organic products, followed by environmental considerations and perceived quality. However, the frequency of purchase remains relatively low due to key barriers such as high prices, limited availability, and skepticism regarding certification and labeling. Demographic factors such as age, income, and education significantly influence consumer attitudes and purchasing behavior. Young, educated, and higher-income individuals are more likely to adopt organic food as part of their lifestyle. While the organic food market in Chennai shows promising potential, it requires stronger

efforts from producers, retailers, and policymakers to overcome existing challenges. Improving affordability, increasing product accessibility, enhancing trust through reliable certifications, and raising consumer awareness are crucial steps toward expanding the organic food market. In conclusion, the organic food sector in Chennai is at a critical growth stage. With targeted strategies and collaborative efforts from stakeholders, it can evolve into a more inclusive and sustainable market, ultimately benefiting public health, the environment, and the agricultural economy.

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