# CONSUMER PREFERENCE TOWARDS ORGANIC FOOD WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO METROPOLITAN CITY

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DOI No. - 08.2020-25662434

### Abstract

This study was conducted at the discretion of consumers regarding organic food in the city of Chennai. The purpose of this study was to obtain information about consumers' attitudes toward people, health awareness, environmental concerns, knowledge of organic food and organic food behaviour. The sample size of this study is 160. The duration of this study is 3 months. The study was held only in the metro politan city of and not elsewhere. In this study an attempt was made to analyze what motivates consumers to buy organic food products the result shows that the current generation is more concerned with conservation and improvement, which is a significant change in consumer status. The study also raises the scope of the study to measure the current generation's attitude toward natural foods, whether they do so as they have health information or are concerned about the environment.

Keywords: Consumer Preference, Organic Food, Metropolitan City.

### INTRODUCTION

The world's population is growing and countries are making choices about how they produce and consume their development strategies, so far we are fortunate, that the ability to consume goods without increasing their consumption, is limited by a product that does not use resources much in the global market. This is changing. Globalization and new technologies have brought the dream of mass employment to departments around the world. The application of this standard will not apply to all countries without exceeding the carrying capacity of the Earth. This recognition has exposed many social, political, and environmental movements that promote clean production and sustainable lifestyle choices.

The social, environmental and economic costs of the current agricultural production and distribution system lead to new types of production and distribution being explored. Continued by producers' concerns about money and the loss of livelihoods, consumer concerns about food security and quality, increased health awareness, nutrition and community concerns about open space, biodiversity, agricultural pollution, and the economic health of its members, many parties, including governments, are beginning to see the benefits of sustainable agriculture. While the concept of "organic food" seems to be well-known to most consumers, the number of consumers who buy organic food is always low. To better protect consumers from natural and manipulative foods, knowing the factors that affect consumer consumption of organic products is therefore important. Through research, the profile of consumers and non-consumers of live products can be seen. This can be critical to the development of certification for organic food labelling, improving public health and improving the profitability of the food industry.

### **PURPOSE OF RESEARCH**

With growing concerns about health and food safety issues, many consumers have turned their

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site to natural products. Increasing consumer interest in organic food has been attributed, among other things, to the growing demand for pesticides and chemical residues.

Natural foods promote the balance of humans, other organisms and the environment. It also promotes a lack of artificial insemination and maintains good nutrition. This prevents overuse of harmful ingredients and thus ensures health. The purpose of this study was to obtain information on human characteristics, behaviours, health awareness, environmental concerns, information on organic food and organic food behaviour. From the study, the attitude and behavior of natural food purchases will be examined. It will provide natural food retailers with guidance on developing marketing strategies for their products. When organic food is consumed by more consumers, the public can benefit greatly from the public and global health outlook. This leads to a positive trend in favour of consumers, manufacturers and the general public.

## **SCOPE OF THE STUDY**

The scope of this study is limited to the metropolitan city . Research sheds light on consumer preferences and factors that determine consumers' purchasing organic food. It can also help the industry to build their market that promotes sales

## **RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

The objectives of the study are summarized as follows:

- i. Finding a pattern for the use of metropolitan people with organic food.
- ii. Determining the trend of organic food for the general public.
- iii. Identifying personality traits, attitudes, health awareness, environmental concerns and the level of biological knowledge in relation to the frequency of consumption of organic food.
- iv. To provide advertisers with recommendations on how to improve live claims and to develop appropriate strategies to attract potential buyers.

In this study, the term "consumers" will be used to refer to those who regularly buy, often or sometimes organic products, while "non-consumers" refers to those who have never bought natural products.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Study	Descriptive Study
Period of study	3 Months
Area of study	Metropolitan
Sample Size	160
Sources of Data	Primary and Secondary
Instrument Used for Research	Structured Questionnaire
Statistical Tool Used	Simple percentage analysis
	ANOVA & t-test
	Chi-square test
Hypothesis Framed	Null Hypothesis

## Limitation of the study

Following are the research limitations, depending on the answers given by the sample respondents. However, sufficient efforts have been made to collect impartial information.

The survey is reserved for respondents in the metropolitan city and not elsewhere.



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Sample size is limited to 160 respondents only. Respondents show scepticism

### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

Renee Shaw Hugner(2007) on her research discuss that Consumers appear willing to pay higher prices for organic foods based on their perceived health and nutrition benefits, and the global organic food market was estimated in 2007 to be worth £29 billion (£2 billion in the UK alone). Some previous reviews have concluded that organically produced food has a superior nutrient composition to conventional food, but there has to-date been no systematic review of the available published literature.

**Lockieet al. (2002)** identified a strong correlation between increasing consumption of organic food and levels of formal education. A number of studies have consistently established the fact that gender has been a significant predictor of the purchase behaviour of organic food products.

**Cranfield and Magnusson (2003)** states that the income level of the consumers is more likely to affect the purchase decisions of organic food products. Noted that consumers with higher income levels are more likely to spend more on organic food products. The reason could be that organic food products are perceived as costlier than conventional products in general.

Chinnici et al. and Harper and Makatouni (2002) made a large number of studies are available in the literature which identified reasons for purchasing of organic food products. In a study it was found that one of the most important reasons for purchasing organic products has been the perceived health benefits of organic food products when compared to conventional food products.

**Vermeir and Verbeke (2004)** have proved that consumers weigh up health benefits of organic food products on a higher scale than its environmental benefits or benefit to the community in their decision to purchase organic food products.

Researchers from the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine (2007) have now completed the most extensive systematic review of the available published literature on nutrient content of organic food ever conducted. The review focused on nutritional content and did not include a review of the content of contaminants or chemical residues in foods from different agricultural production regiment.

Somnath Chakrabarti and Rajat K Baisya (2009) in their paper Purchase of Organic Food: Role of consumer Innovativeness and Personal Influence Related Constructs, investigate purchase behaviour in the light of such variables as consumer innovativeness, related perceived risk and the personal influence, demographic factors and time of adoption. The study was done through a survey of organic food buyers in the Delhi national capital region (NCR). The study has considered Organic food in India as an innovative category as it is purchased by a relatively small percentage of the potential market and is in the attention spans of relevant target groups for a relatively small period of time. The main constructs discussed in the study are: domain specific innovativeness (DSI), opinion leadership (OL), opinion seeking (OS), relevant word of mouth (WOM). The study looks at the importance of channels of communication between

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consumers suggest channels for the marketing of organic produce.

Magkos, Arvaniti and Zampelas (2006) are of the view that Organic fruits and vegetables can be expected to contain fewer agrochemical residues than conventionally grown alternatives; but the significance of this difference is questionable, as the actual levels of contamination in both types of food are generally well below acceptable limits. They also mention that though some leafy, root, and tuber organic vegetables appear to have lower nitrate content compared with conventional ones, whether or not dietary nitrate indeed constitutes a threat to human health is a matter of debate. They conclude saying that other factors rather than safety aspects seem to speak in favors of organic food. This is a common statement form studies on organic food and therefore leaves the consumer confused as to the real conclusion. Further research in the area is extremely necessary to get an opinion.

**Rimal and Balasubramanian 2005)** reports in most of their studies that the consumer believes that organic are safer than conventional food. Another study on safety relating to organic food found three segments of consumers with different risk perceptions. The segments were found to be financial risk orientated, physical risk oriented, and performance risk oriented. Even the extent of risk perceived in different product categories differed.

(**Drichoutis, Lazaridis and Naygya 2006**) has found that use of nutritional label affects purchasing behaviour mainly because consumers want to avoid the negative nutrients in food products. The effects can be even greater if labeling is combined with an information campaign to educate consumers. It appears that nutritional information affects purchasing behaviour because it influences valuations and perceptions of the product.

**Squires et al. (2001)** identifies that concern for health, environmental protection, concern for the chemical residues in conventional food products, pesticides, nutritional concerns, as well as improved taste and flavor in organic products are also some of the factors identified by them.

**Lea and Worsley (2005)** made a study in Australia and found that most of the respondents believed that organic food was healthier, tastier and better for the environment than conventional food.

**Fotopoulos and Krystallis (2002),** In this study Greek consumers seem to be informed about environmental and health issues. They seek information about the nutritional value of food and demand more products free from chemical residues. Most Greek consumers associate organic consumption mainly with fruit and vegetables.

**Davis et al. (1995)** found that women seem to be more interested in organics than men, and they were more frequent buyers than men. Overall, more positive attitudes towards organic food have been detected in women as opposed to men

Wandel and Bugge, (1997); Thompson and Kidwell, (1998); von Alvensleben, (1998); Fotopoulos and Krystallis, (2002) found that the age seems also to affect consumer attitudes towards organic food. Young people are more environmentally conscious but less willing to pay more due to their lower purchasing power, whereas older people are more

health conscious and more willing to pay an extra price for organic food.

**Hamzaoui and Zahaf, (2008).** In Canada, consumers identify health, the environment, and support of local farmers as principal values explaining their consumption. These motivations and values are leading Organic food consumers to accept large price difference between organic and conventional food products.

Millock et al., Fotopoulos and Kryskallis, Zanoli and Naspetti, (2002). Although some organic consumers are environmentally conscious, most studies confirm the predominance of egocentric values like health, attitude towards taste, and freshness that influence organic food choice more than the attitudes towards environment and animal welfare

## DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

## Beliefs relating to organic food by the respondents:

The profile of the customers' based on the **Beliefs relating to organic food** by the respondents is given in following table

Level of importan	ce based on the following factors						
		1	2	3	4	5	Grand total
Organic products are from the farm	No %	64 40	73 45.625	21 13.125	2 1.25	0	160 100
Organic food is more nutritious than ordinary food	No s	83 51.875	52 32.5	24 15	1 0.625	0	160 100
Organic food is tastier than ordinary food	No	50	74	27	9	0	160
	%	31.25	46.25	16.875	5.625	0	100
Organic food are with official seal	No	25	41	84	9	1	160
	%	15.625	25.625	52.5	5.625	0.625	100
Organic foods are generally fresh	No	52	67	31	10	0	160
	%	32.5	41.875	19.375	6.25	0	100
A wide range of organic food can be bought where I shop	No	45	71	23	13	8	160
	%	28.125	44.375	14.375	8.125	5	100
Organic food are free from chemical pesticides and fertilizers residues	No	48	79	23	5	5	160
	%	30	49.375	14.375	3.125	3.125	100
We can judge if a product is organic or not by its outlook appearance	No	44	69	31	15	1	160
	%	27.5	43.125	19.375	9.375	0.625	100
Real organic products can only be bought in large supermarkets, department stores r organic food stores	No	29	66	33	16	16	160
	%	18.125	41.25	20.625	10	10	100

Source: Primary Data

From the above table it is clear that the half of the respondents strongly agrees that Organic



food is more nutritious than ordinary food (51 Percent) and its free from chemical pesticides and fertilizers residues (49 Percent). Most of the respondents agree that Organic food is tastier than ordinary food (46 Percent), are from the farm (45 Percent), wide range of organic food can be bought where they shop (44 Percent), they can judge if a product is organic or not by its outlook appearance(43 Percent), they are generally fresh(41 Percent) and Real organic products can only be bought in large supermarkets, department stores r organic food stores (41 Percent) and half of the respondents neutrally agree that they are with official seal (52 Percent).

## MOTIVATIONS THAT WILL PERSUADE YOU TO BUY ORGANIC FOODS INSTEAD OF NON - ORGANIC FOODS(BENEFITS)

The profile of the customers' based on Motivations that will persuade to buy organic foods the is given in table

Table 1.1

	Frequency	Percent
Most important	81	50.625
Important	53	33.125
Neutral	12	7.5
Less important	11	6.875
Least important	5	1.875

From the above table it is clear that the half of the respondents (50.625 percent) say that the benefits of organic food is the most important reason why they would prefer to buy it, 33.125 Percent say that benefits of organic food will play an important role, 7.5 Percent are neutral to this, others 8 Percent say that benefits of organic food will play an least important role in persuading them to buy organic food.

### CHALLENGES FACED BY THE RESPONDENTS IN BUYING ORGANIC FOOD

The profile of the customers' based on the Challenges faced By the Respondents in buying organic food is given in table

## CHALLENGES FACED BY THE RESPONDENTS IN BUYING ORGANIC FOOD

### Table 2

		strongly agree	agree	neutral	disagree	strongly disagree	total
More expensive than non- organic fruits	No	21	44	46	18	31	160
	%	13.125	27.5	28.75	11.25	19.375	100
No guarantee of quality / authenticity	No	3	41	35	58	23	160
	%	1.875	25.625	21.875	36.25	14.375	100
Taste is not good as compared to non-organic fruits	No	4	34	38	54	30	160

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	%	2.5	21.25	23.75	33.75	18.75	100
Limited availability in market	No	30	31	30	45	23	160
	%	18.75	19.375	18.75	28.125	14.375	100
Difficult to find	No	17	25	40	41	37	160
	%	10.625	15.625	25	25.625	23.125	100
Don't look good or appealing	No	4	40	41	64	11	160
	%	2.5	25	25.625	40	6.875	100
Smaller size of organic fruit as compared to non-organic	No	17	39	23	62	19	160
	%	10.625	24.375	14.375	38.75	11.875	100
No certification of being organic	No	10	33	41	43	27	160
	%	6.25	20.625	25.625	26.875	16.875	100
Limited information about organic products	No	16	42	29	36	37	160
	%	10	26.25	18.125	22.5	23.125	100
Not Fresh as compared to non- organic fruits	No	14	18	41	45	42	160
	%	8.75	11.25	25.625	28.125	26.25	100

Source: Primary Data

Table 2 depicts that the respondents agree that they have limited information about organic products (26 Percent). And few of the respondents are neutral with the statements that they are expensive (28.75 Percent) and Not Fresh (28 Percent)as compared to non-organic food and most of the respondents disagree with the statements that there is No guarantee of quality / authenticity (36 Percent), Taste is not good as compared to non-organic fruits (33 Percent), Limited availability in market (28 Percent), they are not appealing (40Percent), Smaller size of organic fruit as compared to non-organic (38 Percent) and No certification of being organic (26 Percent).

## Behavior towards environmental friendliness by the respondents:

The profile of the customers' based on the behavior towards environmental friendliness by the respondents s is given in table 2.1

**Table 2.1: Behavior towards environmental friendliness by the respondents:** 

					<i>y</i>		
		1	2	3	4	5	total
I avoid purchasing products in environmental unfriendly packages	No	64	53	32	11		160
	%	40	33.125	20	6.875		100
I always save energy	No	48	77	31	4		160
	%	30	48.125	19.375	2.5		100



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I prefer to buy environmental friendly labeled products.	No	61	47	38	14		160
	%	38.125	29.375	23.75	8.75		100
I always recycle plastic bottles & newspaper etc	No	27	72	41	20		160
	%	16.875	45	25.625	12.5		100
I use double sides of a paper before throwing it away or taking it recycled.	No	24	72	31	23	10	160
	%	15	45	19.375	14.375	6.25	100
I bring my shopping bag when I go shopping.	No	63	68	20	8	1	160
	%	39.375	42.5	12.5	5	0.625	100
I always donate things I do not need (electric appliances, computers, toys, clothes) to the charity.	No	29	57	43	26	5	160
	%	18.125	35.625	26.875	16.25	3.125	100
I always avoid using disposable tableware.	No	59	50	24	16	11	160
	%	36.875	31.25	15	10	6.875	100

Source: Primary Data

From the above table it is clear that the most of the respondents strongly agrees that they avoid purchasing products in environmental unfriendly packages (40 Percent) and prefers buying environmentally friendly labelled products (38 Percent) and also, they always avoid using disposable tableware (36 Percent). Majority of the respondents agree that they always saves energy (48 Percent), recycles plastic bottles & newspaper etc (45 Percent), use double sides of a paper before throwing it away or taking it recycled (45 Percent), also they bring their own shopping bag when they go shopping (42 Percent) and donate things they does not need to the charity (35 Percent).

Findings following are the important findings of the study,

### **SIMPLE PERCENTAGE ANALYSIS:**

- 51.25 Percent of the respondents are female
- 33.75 Percent of the respondents are in the age group of 16 to 25 years
- 38.75 Percent of the respondents are under graduated
- 61.875 Percent of the respondent's marital status is married
- 58.75 Percent of the respondents have a family size of 4 members
- 52.5 Percent of the respondents have an annual income of below 50000
- 95 Percent of the respondents are aware of organic food
- 5 Percent of the respondents are not aware of organic food
- Some people (40%) know organic food from last 6 months
- 39.375 Percent of the respondents buy once a month



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- 37.5 Percent of the respondents know about organic food through magazines
- Maximum people (108) signify organic food with pesticides /chemical free
- 61.25 Percent of the respondents prefers organic food
- 43.125 Percent of the respondents states that prices of organic food is moderate
- 46.25 Percent of the respondents rated organic food as very good
- 38.125 Percent of the respondents always pays attention to information on food labels on food products
- Most of the respondent 95 people would like to buy organic fruits
- Half of the respondents strongly agrees that Organic food is more nutritious than ordinary food (51 Percent)
- Free from chemical pesticides and fertilizers residues (49 Percent).
- Most of the respondents agree that Organic food is tastier than ordinary food (46 Percent),
- Most of the respondents agree that are from the farm (45 Percent)
- Most of the respondents agree that wide range of organic food can be bought where they shop (44 Percent)
- Most of the respondents agree that they can judge if a product is organic or not by its outlook appearance (43 Percent)
- Most of the respondents agree that they are generally fresh(41 Percent) and
- Most of the respondents agree that Real organic products can only be bought in large supermarkets, department stores r organic food stores (41 Percent) and
- Half of the respondents neutrally agree that they are with official seal (52 Percent).
- Respondents ranked good for health as no 1 (40 Percent)
- The half of the respondents (50.625 percent) say that the benefits of organic food is the most important reason why they would prefer to buy it
- 33.125 percent people are affected by packaging and it does play a significant role to persuade them to buy organic food
- 48% people give most importance to price while choosing organic food
- Most of the respondent 47.5 % people tell it is most important motivation while buy organic food
- Health concern is the most important factor for buying organic food(836.125 Percent)
- Most of the respondents the respondents ranked More cheaper as no 1 (45 Percent)
- Respondents agree that they have limited information about organic products (26 Percent).
- And few of the respondents are neutral with the statements that they are expensive (28.75 Percent) and Not Fresh (28 Percent) as compared to non-organic food.
- And most of the respondents disagree with the statements that there is No guarantee of quality / authenticity (36 Percent)
- Respondents says that Taste is not good as compared to non-organic fruits (33 Percent) and are Limited availability in market (28 Percent)
- Respondents states that they are not appealing (40Percent) and Smaller size of organic fruit as compared to non-organic (38 Percent)
- Respondents agree that there is No certification of being organic (26 Percent)



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- Most of the respondents strongly agrees that they avoid purchasing products in environmental unfriendly packages (40 Percent)
- Most of the respondents strongly agrees to prefers buying environmental friendly labeled products (38 Percent)
- Respondents always avoid using disposable tableware (36 Percent).
- Majority of the respondents agree that they always saves energy (48 Percent),
- Majority of the respondents recycles plastic bottles & newspaper etc (45 Percent), use double sides of a paper before throwing it away or taking it recycled (45 Percent),
- 42 Percent of respondents says that they bring their own shopping bag when they go shopping and
- 35 Percent of respondents donate things they do not need to the charity (35 Percent).

### **ANOVA**

- There is no significant difference in the mean score of the respondents towards organic food based on their age. Hence the hypothesis is rejected
- There is significant difference in the mean score of the respondents towards organic food based on their educational qualification. Hence the hypothesis is accepted.
- There is no significant difference in the mean satisfaction score of the respondents towards organic food based on their family size. Hence the hypothesis is rejected.
- There is no significant difference in the mean satisfaction score of the respondents towards organic food based on their monthly income. Hence the hypothesis is rejected.
- There is significant difference in the mean opinion score of the respondents towards organic food based on their gender. Hence the hypothesis is accepted.
- There is no significant difference in the mean opinion score of the respondents towards organic food based on their age. Hence the hypothesis is rejected.
- There is no significant difference in the mean score of the respondents towards problems/challenges in buying organic food based on their educational qualification. Hence the hypothesis is rejected
- There is significant difference in the mean score of the respondents towards problems / challenges in buying organic food based on their family size. Hence the hypothesis is Accepted
- There is significant difference in the mean score of the respondents towards problems / challenges in buying organic food based on their family size. Hence the hypothesis is Accepted
- There is no significant difference in the mean satisfaction score of the respondents towards organic food based on their monthly income. Hence the hypothesis is rejected.

### **T-TEST**

- There is no significant difference between the male and female respondents regarding their mean opinion score towards organic food and hence the hypothesis is accepted
- There is significant difference in the mean satisfaction score of the respondents towards organic food based on their marital status. Hence the hypothesis is accepted



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## **SUGGESTIONS**

- 1. In this metropolitan city there is low awareness among people but they are keen to know about organic food. We can create awareness among people through exhibitions and promotions of organic products.
- 2. Organic food is creating brand loyalty among their customers if the companies will provide the products in same price range of inorganic products for customer benefit. The products are certified with USDA (United States Department of Agriculture) as it bonds a trust of product with consumers so it is necessary to highlight this feature.
- 3. Organization should introduce number of stores to provide facility to customer; and provide services like home delivery for the convenience for customers.
- 4. A quality guarantee of organic food products directly influences consumption intensity, absorption power of the market, packaging material design, advertising messages, choice of the distribution channel, and distinguishing organic from conventional products according to their market characteristics makes the fundamental factor of the product differentiation and diversification with the aim of producing such organic food that would certainly find its way to the consumer.
- 5. As organic farming is labor intensive, a proper training to farmers about organic inputs and farming techniques is a must. Allowing the private sector to assist the farmers through knowledge and information must be encouraged. Naturally contract farming would be a way out.

## **CONCLUSION**

The awareness about organic food products is increasing among the people and their intention to buy organic food is shaped by various beliefs. Their actual buying behavior is direct result of strong intention and attitudinal values towards the benefits of the organic products. An attempt has been made in this study to analyze what motivates consumers to purchase organic food products the result shows that present generation is getting more concerned towards environmentally preservation and upgrading, which is something remarkable

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