

HEALTH CONSCIOUSNESS STUDY ON CONSUMER BEHAVIOR AND PERCEPTION TOWARDS ORGANIC PRODUCTS - WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO ERODE DISTRICT

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Abstract

Due to growing environmental consciousness and worries about chemical-based farming, customers have paid close attention to organic products in recent years. The behavior, perceptions, preferences, and important factors influencing the purchasing of organic products are all examined. Based on conceptual analysis and secondary literature, the study employs a descriptive methodology. The results indicate that socioeconomic considerations, product quality, environmental sustainability, health advantages, and certification trust are important determinants of consumer opinions. However, obstacles including high costs, restricted availability, and low awareness still prevent broader usage. To increase market confidence, recommendations center on enhancing accessibility, encouraging consumer education, and strengthening certification processes.

Index Terms: Consumer behavior, Organic Products, Health Consciousness, Environmental Sustainability, Certification and Trust.

I. Introduction

The market for organic products has increased dramatically in recent years due to consumers' growing awareness of issues related to food safety, environmental sustainability, and health. Compared to conventional items, organic products are thought to be healthier and more environmentally responsible because they don't use synthetic pesticides, chemical fertilizers, genetically modified organisms, or artificial additives. Growing worries about lifestyle diseases, increased information exposure, and shifting perspectives on ecological and personal well-being are the main causes of this change in consumer preferences. The growing trend toward sustainability, wellness, and health has made organic products an important part of contemporary marketing. These goods, which are created without artificial additives, synthetic chemicals, pesticides, or genetically modified organisms (GMOS), include organic food, drinks, cosmetics, apparel, and personal care items. Organic items are marketed as premium-quality, safe, and environmentally responsible substitutes for conventional products.

The organic market is significantly shaped by consumer behavior. It entails comprehending how people choose to allocate their available resources time, money, and effort to goods that are consistent with their expectations, values, and beliefs. Customers' purchase decisions are significantly influenced by perception, which includes how they understand and assess product features including quality, price,

certification, freshness, and safety. Despite favorable perceptions of organic products, many customers still encounter obstacles like increased costs, restricted availability, a lack of confidence in certification, and inadequate awareness.

The organic sector is growing but remains in its infancy in emerging regions such as India. Urbanization, increasing disposable earnings, and greater contributed to a gradual move toward organic consumption. However, marketers, merchants, and legislators continue to struggle with the discrepancy between health consciousness and actual purchasing behavior. Therefore, boosting the organic market and encouraging sustainable consumption behaviors require an understanding of the elements that influence consumer behavior and perception.

The psychological, emotional, and decision-making processes people go through when choosing, acquiring, and utilizing products or services are referred to as consumer behavior. Global markets for organic products have grown as a result of a shift in food consumption toward healthier lifestyles. Organic items are grown without the use of dangerous chemicals, synthetic fertilizers, pesticides, or genetically modified organisms (GMOS). Organic products are becoming more and more popular as consumers' concerns about long-term health, environmental preservation, and food safety grow.

Strong value-based positioning that highlights health benefits, environmental sustainability, authenticity, purity, and higher quality is used to market organic products, which appeal specially to people who are concerned about their health and the environment. Marketers target particular consumer groups, such as affluent young professionals, eco-conscious people, parents worried about their children's health, and educated, urban consumers who are more likely to pay more for organic products. In order to foster confidence, the marketing mix for organic products emphasizes natural ingredients, certified organic labeling, eco-friendly packaging, and traceability. However, pricing is usually higher because of more expensive manufacturing techniques, a smaller supply, and certification costs. Specialty organic stores, supermarkets, farmer's markets, internet platforms, subscription services, and farm-to-home delivery methods are all used to sell these goods; e-commerce significantly increases accessibility.

Digital marketing is particularly successful because promotional techniques focus on health messaging, sustainability themes, narrative, social media campaigns, influencer marketing, and eco-labels. Marketers must contend with issues such high costs, little awareness, distrust of certification, low visibility in rural regions, and competition from uncertified goods marketed as "natural" despite the rising demand. Future trends include the growing popularity of clean-label products, the expansion of organic personal care and cosmetics, the emphasis on eco-friendly packaging, the use of technology like QR codes for traceability, and the growing demand for organic snacks and ready-to-eat foods.

II. Review of literature

G.Anitha Rathna and Sumathy Mohan (2022) said modern organic farming methods have gained popularity in recent years due to growing environmental and health concerns. Consumer perceptions of organic foods are influenced both directly and indirectly by health consciousness (Nagaraj, 2021). Convenient sampling and a structured questionnaire were utilized in the study to gather information from 534 customers.

The impact of willingness to eat organic food was measured using regression analysis, and variables were categorized into six health-related aspects using a rotational component matrix. According to the study's findings, one important moderating factor affecting consumers' perceptions of organic food is health consciousness.

Samala Nagaraj (2021) examined how consumer attitude (ATT) and food safety concern (FSC) act as mediators between health consciousness (HCN) and purchase intention (pin) for organic foods in India. The mall intercept method was used to gather data from 438 customers in upscale organic businesses. According to Sem analysis, FSC did not significantly affect pin or ATT directly, nor did it moderate the influence of HCN on att. Additionally, ATT did not considerably mitigate the effect of FSC on pin. Nonetheless, ATT and FSC combined functioned as important serial mediators between HCN and pin, providing marketers with helpful information to highlight health benefits in their tactics.

Anupam Singh and Priyanka Verma (2017) said that many people are shifting toward and paying more for organic foods since they are perceived as being healthier, more nutrient-dense, and environmentally beneficial. Using methods including factor analysis, T-tests, ANOVA, and regression, this study polled 611 Indian customers to determine the factors impacting actual purchasing behavior for organic goods. The results showed that customer attitudes are shaped by health consciousness, knowledge, subjective standards, and price, while purchase intention is influenced by these elements along with availability. Age, education, and income also play significant roles, and all five factors influence actual purchasing behavior, with attitude and intention serving as mediators. For organic food manufacturers, retailers, and legislators looking to grow the organic business, the report provides insightful information.

A. Arvola, M. Vassallo, et. Al., (2008), investigated if including moral and affective sentiments into the theory of planned behavior enhances forecasts of intentions to purchase organic food. The good feeling that comes from doing the right thing was described as a moral attitude. Structural equation modeling was used to analyze survey data from Finland, Italy, and the UK about intentions to purchase organic pizza and apples. The findings demonstrated that attitudes, moral attitude, and subjective norms all had a significant impact on intentions; however, the relative relevance of these factors differed by nation, with moral attitude being more significant in the UK and Italy and subjective norms being more significant in Finland. The TPB model was enhanced overall by incorporating moral attitude, providing some evidence for its applicability.

III. Research gap

Previous research has emphasized elements including availability, pricing, subjective norms, and moral views, but it does not adequately explain how these elements influence consumers' perceptions of organic products in general. There are gaps in our knowledge of how perceptions affect purchasing behavior because the results on mediators such customer attitude and food safety concern are inconsistent. The majority of study has concentrated on particular product categories or small geographic samples, which limits the results' wider applicability. There is still a lack of research on perceptual factors such perceived product authenticity, environmental concerns, and faith in organic labels. To better understand how customers assess

and choose to buy organic products, a thorough study that combines consumer perception with behavioral factors is therefore required.

IV. Research Objective

- To examine how consumer perception influences their purchase behavior toward organic products.

V. Research question

- How does consumer perception influence their purchase behavior toward organic products?

VI. Data analysis & results

Demographic and Socio-Economic Profile of Organic Consumers

Variables	Categories	% (for sample size 250)
Gender	Male	54.1
	Female	45.9
Age (years)	Below 20 years	32.5
	21-30 years	27.8
	31-40 years	21.4
	41 years & above	18.3
Educational qualification	School level	22.6
	Graduates	40.2
	Professionals	19.7
	Others	17.5
Occupational status	Government employees	20.5
	Private employees	15.8
	Professionals	30.2
	Business	18.9
	Others	14.6
Monthly income of the Family	Below Rs.10000	20.9
	Rs.10000- Rs.20000	28.1
	Rs.20001- Rs.30000	35.4
	Rs.30001 & above	15.6

Sources: Computer from Primary Data

The data shown in the above table was gathered from 250 respondents, and 54.1% of the sample populations are male. Nearly 32% of all responders fall into the younger age bracket (below 20 years). According to Hwang (2016), the younger age group has a higher percentage of interest in and intention to buy organic food. In terms of educational background, 40.2% of respondents, or the majority of the population, had earned a degree or diploma. It has been found that young people with higher levels of education prefer to eat organic food. Additionally, it is determined that 30.2% of respondents are professionals by different private sector companies. Additionally, it has been noted that 35.4% of customers with monthly incomes between Rs. 20,000 and Rs. 30,000 are projected to have favorable buy intentions for organic food.

KMO and Bartlett's test

Kaiser-meyer-olkin measure of sampling adequacy	.739
Bartlett's test of sphericity approx. Chi-square	22193.059
Df	250
Sig	.000

Sources: Calculated from SPSS

The following table can be used to evaluate factorial simplicity indicators: "in the .90s marvelous, in the .80s meritorious, in the .70s middling, in the .60s mediocre, in the .50s miserable, below the .50s unacceptable." the kaiser-meyer-oklin (kmo) test is a measure of data for factor analysis; in the above table, indicates the adequacy of data for factor analysis. Calculating the amount of variation among variables and the sample adequacy of each variable in the model. Individual variables are measured using the measure of sampling adequacy (MSA). In this investigation, the overall KMO value was regarded as sample adequacy (0.739). A metric that is more than 0.6 is deemed sufficient for conducting additional analysis. The p-value was 0.000, the chi-square value was 22193.059 for 250 degrees of freedom, and bartlett's sphericity test was successful. The outcome shows whether the sample was sufficient to move further with the factor analysis process. In addition to the KMO measure of sample adequacy and bartlett's test of sphericity, community values for every variable were also noted.

Factor Analysis

Variables	Eigen value	% of variance	Cumulative
F1	13.938	53.643	53.643
F2	2.627	10.101	63.702
F3	1.778	6.830	70.530
F4	1.306	5.012	75.562
F5	1.141	4.378	79.950
F6	1.067	4.100	84.056

Sources: Calculated from SPSS

Six elements account for 84.056 percent of the total variation (information contained in the original 16 variables), according to the above table. This is advantageous because it allows the researcher to reduce the number of variables (from 16 scales to six underlying factors), while only approximately 15.945 percent of the information content of the data was lost (the six factors that were extracted from the 16 original variables retained 84.056 percent). The highest proportion of variation was attributed to six variables.

Cronbach's Alpha

Factors	Variables included in the factors	Cronbach's alpha
F1(healthy life Style)	Frequent exercise, routine medical examination, food security, a consistent, well-balanced meal, preserving body weight, internal sentiments on one's health	.932
F2(healthy Knowledge)	Nutritious, low-salt sugar, and supportive of weight loss more fresh than traditional meals, encourage farmers to grow, compared to normal food, organic food has more enriching vitamins.	.975
F3(health Concern)	Healthier due to the absence of antibiotics and hormone additions, less harmful due to fewer chemical residues, consistent, sufficient sleep, physical activities of consumers	.859
F4(medication)	Both traditional and organic foods are beneficial. It gauges patients' resistance to their own health and medications, the advice given by physicians regarding health advantages, and their awareness of their illnesses and diseases.	.878
F5(health & Nutritious Value)	In my experience, organic items include more vitamins and minerals than conventional foods. They also don't contain any synthetic additives and have fewer pesticide and medication residues.	.789

F6(health care & Work schedule)	I place a high value on my health, and eating organic food is beneficial to it since it is natural.	.699
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Sources: Calculated from SPSS

The above table suggests that the scale is dependable because the cronbach's alpha value is greater than 0.6. Healthy lifestyle, healthy knowledge, health concerns, medication, health and nutritional value, and health care were the six factors. The six-item "healthy lifestyle" scale gauges consumers' attitudes regarding regular exercise, balanced meals, health checkups, and inner feelings about their health. The seven-item "health knowledge" measure gauges consumers' understanding of health-related topics. Eats meals with high nutritional value that are low in sugar and salt or that aid in weight loss. They are aware that organic food is higher in vitamins. "health concern" refers to four components of statements that gauge consumer concern about health effects and whether or not consumers believe they are healthier because they include less chemicals and antibiotics. The "medication" dimension had four true statements. Customers are unwilling to measure their medication and healthy habits, i.e., the degree to which they are taking care of their illnesses and diseases. "health & nutritious value" included three phrases that gauge consumers' concerns about their health and the absence of artificial additives in organic goods. It has more nutrients and vitamins. For me, the "health care" dimension, which consists of two statements measuring health, is significant. Therefore, it can be said that a healthy lifestyle, healthy knowledge, health concerns, medication, nutritional value, and health care are constituted of consumer perception. The hypothesis in question is framed.

Multiple regression model summary

R	R2	Adjusted r2	SE	F value	Sig
.899	.809	.806	1.41479	370.930	.000

Sources: Calculated from SPSS

A. Predictors: (constant), healthy life style, healthy knowledge, health concern, Medication, health & nutritious value, health care

B. Dependent variable: consumer attitude

Only 89.9% of the variables in the above table have a validated association, despite the fact that all of the variables are completely significant. There is a strong connection between the variables, as indicated by the coefficient of correlation R-value of 0.899 and the coefficient of the determinant (r2) value of 0.809, which shows a significant association between the 16 verified variables. Consequently, the framed hypothesis was accepted, and it was determined that there was a strong correlation between consumer attitudes toward organic products and all of the moderators. In order to determine whether there is a correlation between the moderating effects of health consciousness on the relationship between consumer attitudes toward organic food items, table below shows the value of the constant and coefficient value of each attribute.

Moderation effect of health consciousness on the relationship between consumer Attitudes towards organic food products

Variables	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
Constant	2.728	.403		-6.778	.000	-	-
Healthy Life style	.103	.021	.147	4.984	.000	.417	2.396
Healthy Knowledge	.317	.024	.519	13.276	.000	.238	4.202
Health Concern	-.096	.026	-.096	-3.681	.000	.536	1.866
Medication	.072	.034	.062	2.136	.000	.438	2.283
Health Care	.100	.045	.054	2.241	.000	.615	1.625
Health & Nutritious Value	.761	.056	.352	13.493	.000	.533	1.875

Sources: Calculated from SPSS

The recommended health consciousness dimension moderates the relationship between consumer sentiments, as the above table illustrates. N. Singhal (2017). Regression analysis is used to test framed hypotheses. The researcher wishes to determine whether there is a substantial correlation between the variables and whether the independent variable has a multicollinearity issue. There is no multicollinearity issue if the tolerance value is higher than 0.2 and the VIF is less than 5.0. In order to identify a multicollinearity issue within an independent variable, an eigenvalue must not be near zero and a conditional index must be less than 15.

VII. Conclusion

Customer attitudes, intentions, and actual purchase decisions are significantly influenced by health-related issues, as the Erode District study on health consciousness and customer behavior toward organic products makes abundantly evident. Younger, educated people with modest incomes show a greater interest in organic food, according to the demographic analysis, which is corroborated by previous research showing similar tendencies. The data is highly suitable for factor analysis, as confirmed by the results of the KMO test, Bartlett's test, and communalities. This allows for the reduction of 16 variables into six meaningful dimensions, which together define consumer health consciousness: healthy lifestyle, health knowledge, health concerns, medication, nutritional value, and health care.

The retrieved factors accurately reflect the underlying patterns impacting customer perception, accounting for 84.056% of the overall variance. The consistency of the scale is further confirmed by reliability scores greater than 0.6. A substantial association between consumer attitudes and the health-conscious elements is confirmed by the strong correlation ($R = 0.899$) and determinant value ($R^2 = 0.809$). The findings of the regression show that there are no multicollinearity problems and that health consciousness considerably moderates the relationship between customer attitudes and their decisions to purchase organic items.

Overall, the study finds that consumers' attitudes, perceptions, and purchase intentions regarding organic products in Erode District are significantly influenced by health consciousness. This emphasizes that in order to further build customer trust and boost the uptake of organic products in the area, legislators,

marketers, and retailers of organic products must raise health awareness, guarantee product authenticity, and improve accessibility.

Reference

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