

A STUDY ON CONSUMER BUYING BEHAVIOUR TOWARDS ORGANIC FOOD PRODUCTS WITH REFERENCE TO ERODE DISTRICT

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ABSTRACT

The growing awareness of health, environmental sustainability and food safety has significantly influenced consumer purchasing patterns across the world. In recent years, organic food products have gained considerable attention as consumers increasingly prefer foods produced without the use of synthetic fertilizers, pesticides, genetically modified organisms or harmful chemicals. The following are objective of the study, (i) to examine the socio-economic profile of consumers purchasing organic food products in Erode District, (ii) to analyse the factors influencing consumer buying behaviour towards organic food products, (iii) to find the relationship between buying behaviour and level of awareness regarding organic food products among consumers and (iv) to offer suitable suggestions for promoting the consumption of organic food products. The present study conducted in Erode, structured questionnaire prepared by the researcher for data collection. Convenient sampling method used for data collection. Percentage analysis and Correlation coefficient used to find the relationship between buying behaviour and source of awareness. The study concluded that the study provides valuable insights into consumer buying behaviour towards organic food products and offers practical recommendations for improving market development. The findings will benefit producers, marketers, policymakers and consumers while contributing to the long-term growth of sustainable agriculture and healthy food consumption in Erode District.

KEYWORDS: Organic Products, Buying Behaviour, Awareness, Environmental Sustainability and Harmful Chemicals.

INTRODUCTION

The growing awareness of health, environmental sustainability and food safety has significantly influenced consumer purchasing patterns across the world. In recent years, organic food products have gained considerable attention as consumers increasingly prefer foods produced without the use of synthetic fertilizers, pesticides, genetically modified organisms or harmful chemicals. Organic farming not only promotes healthier food

consumption but also contributes to environmental conservation, biodiversity, and sustainable agricultural development.

India has witnessed remarkable growth in the organic food market due to increasing health consciousness, rising disposable income, changing lifestyles and government initiatives promoting organic agriculture. Consumers are becoming more concerned about food quality, nutritional value and the long-term health effects of consuming conventionally grown food products. Hence, the demand for organic fruits, vegetables, cereals, pulses, dairy products, spices, and processed organic foods has increased substantially.

Erode District, popularly known as the "Turmeric City of India," possesses a strong agricultural base and has emerged as an important region for the cultivation and marketing of agricultural commodities. The district has significant potential for organic farming because of its fertile soil, favourable climatic conditions and increasing awareness among farmers regarding sustainable agricultural practices. At the same time, consumers in Erode are gradually shifting towards healthier food choices due to increasing education, urbanization and access to information through digital media.

Consumer buying behaviour towards organic food products is influenced by several factors, including health consciousness, environmental concern, product quality, availability, price, brand image, certification, packaging, promotional activities and social influence. Understanding these factors is essential for producers, retailers, marketers and policymakers to formulate effective strategies for promoting organic food consumption.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The demand for organic food products has increased steadily due to rising health awareness, environmental concerns and changing consumer lifestyles. Despite this growth, the market for organic food products continues to face several challenges. High prices, limited availability, lack of consumer awareness, inadequate promotional activities, counterfeit products and limited trust in organic certification often discourage consumers from purchasing organic food regularly. Many consumers recognize the health benefits of organic food but hesitate to purchase these products because they are uncertain about product authenticity, certification standards, and value for money. The conventional food products are more easily available and relatively inexpensive, making them the preferred choice for a large segment of consumers.

In Erode District, where agriculture plays a vital role in the local economy, understanding consumer buying behaviour towards organic food products becomes particularly important. Although organic farming is gradually expanding, there is limited empirical evidence regarding consumer preferences, purchasing frequency, influencing factors, satisfaction levels, and barriers affecting organic food consumption in the district. The present study seeks to examine the consumer buying behaviour towards organic food products with reference to Erode District. The findings are expected to assist marketers, producers, retailers, policymakers and agricultural agencies in formulating effective marketing strategies and promoting sustainable consumption practices.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To examine the socio-economic profile of consumers purchasing organic food products in Erode District.
2. To analyse the factors influencing consumer buying behaviour towards organic food products.
3. To find the relationship between buying behaviour and level of awareness regarding organic food products among consumers.
4. To offer suitable suggestions for promoting the consumption of organic food products.

FACTORS INFLUENCING BUYING BEHAVIOUR

1. Health consciousness
2. Product quality

3. Environmental awareness
4. Products availability
5. Pricing
6. Certification and promotional activity.

SAMPLING DESIGN

The present study conducted in Erode, structured questionnaire prepared by the researcher for data collection. It included socio economic profile of the respondents, variables related to awareness level, consumer preference and consumer satisfaction, each has each 5 variables. Convenient sampling method used for data collection, distributed 200 questionnaire in Erode, out of it 193 filled questionnaire were collected back, all the filled questionnaires were taken for data analysis.

TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES

The researcher adopted percentage analysis, chi square test and correlation coefficient used for data analysis. Percentage analysis used to present the socio economic profile of the respondents, chi square used to find the influence of socio economic factors and buying behaviour of the respondents. Correlation coefficient used to find the relationship between buying behaviour and source of awareness.

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

PERCENTAGE ANALYSIS

Table 1
Gender of the respondents

Sl. No.	Gender	Number of respondents	Percentage
1	Male	72	37.31
2	Female	121	62.69
3	Transgender	0	0
	Total	193	100

Source : Primary data

The above table shows the gender of the respondents, out of 193 sample respondents, seventy two (37.31%) respondents are male and remaining one hundred and twenty one (62.69%) respondents are female. During the study there were no transgender available in the area, majority (62.69%) of the respondents are female. It shows that the female buying are more buying organic products.

Table 2
Age group of the respondents

Sl. No.	Age group	Number of respondents	Percentage
1	Less than 30 years	27	13.99
2	31 years to 45 years	54	27.98
3	46 years to 60 years	77	39.90
4	Above 60 years	35	18.13
	Total	193	100

Source : Primary data

The above table presented the age group of the respondents, out of 193 sample respondents, twenty seven (13.99%) respondents are less than 30 years old. Fifty four (27.98%) respondents are 31 years to 45 years old. Seventy seven (39.90%) respondents are 46 years to 60 years old and thirty five (18.13%) respondents are above 60 years old. Majority (39.90%) of the respondents are 46 years to 60 years old.

Table 3
Monthly Income of the respondents

Sl. No.	Monthly Income	Number of respondents	Percentage
1	Less than Rs. 25,000	31	16.06
2	Rs. 25,001 to Rs. 50,000	48	24.87
3	Rs. 50,001 to Rs. 75,000	69	35.75
4	Above Rs. 75,000	45	23.32
	Total	193	100

Source : Primary data

The above table presented the monthly income of respondents, out of 193 respondents, thirty one (16.06%) respondent's monthly income is less than Rs. 25,000. Forty eight (24.87%) respondent's monthly income is from Rs. 25,001 to Rs. 50,000. Sixty nine (35.75%) respondent's monthly income is between Rs. 50,001 and Rs. 75,000 and remaining forty five (23.32%) respondent's monthly income is above Rs. 75,000. Majority (35.75%) of the respondent's monthly income is between Rs. 50,001 and Rs. 75,000.

Table 4
Monthly expenses for organic products

Sl. No.	Monthly Expenses	Number of respondents	Percentage
1	Less than Rs. 2,000	76	39.38
2	Rs. 2,001 to Rs. 3,000	61	31.61
3	Above Rs. 3,000	56	29.01
	Total	193	100

Source : Primary data

The above table shows the monthly expenses for organic products of the respondents. Out of 193 respondents, seventy six (39.38%) respondent's monthly expenses for organic products is less than Rs. 2,000. Sixty one (31.61%) respondent's monthly income is between Rs. 2,001 and Rs. 3,000 and remaining fifty six (29.01%) respondent's monthly income is above Rs. 3,000. Majority (39.38%) of the respondent's monthly expenses is less than Rs. 2,000.

Table 5
Family type of the respondents

Sl. No.	Family type	Number of respondents	Percentage
1	Nuclear family	88	45.60
2	Joint family	105	54.40
	Total	193	100

Source : Primary data

The above table shows the family type of the respondents, out of 193 sample respondents, eighty eight (45.60%) respondents are nuclear family and remaining one hundred and five (54.40%) respondents are joint family. Majority (54.40%) of the respondents are joint families.

Table 6
Marital status of the respondents

Sl. No.	Marital Status	Number of respondents	Percentage
1	Married	148	81.87
2	Unmarried	45	18.13
	Total	193	100

Source : Primary data

The above table shows the marital status of the respondents, out of 193 sample respondents, one hundred and forty eight (81.87%) respondents are married and remaining forty five (18.13%) respondents are unmarried. Majority (81.87%) of the respondents are married.

Table 7
Number of family members

Sl. No.	Number of family members	Number of respondents	Percentage
1	3 members	46	23.83
2	4 members	87	45.08
3	5 members and above	60	31.09
	Total	193	100

Source : Primary data

The above table presents the number of family members of the respondents, out of 193 sample respondents, forty six (23.83%) respondent's number of family members are 3. Eighty seven (45.08%) respondent's number of family members are 4 and remaining sixty (31.09%) respondent's number of family members are above 5. Majority (45.08%) of the respondent's family members are 4.

Table 7
Frequent of purchase of organic products

Sl. No.	Frequent of purchase	Number of respondents	Percentage
1	Whenever need	94	48.70
2	Weekly once	61	31.61
3	More than 2 times in a week	38	19.69
	Total	193	100

Source : Primary data

The above table shows the frequent of purchase of the respondents, out of 193 sample respondents, ninety four (48.70%) respondents are purchasing organic food products whenever they need. Sixty one (31.61%) respondents are purchasing organic food products weekly once and remaining thirty eight (19.69%) respondents are purchasing organic food products more than 2 times in a week. Majority (48.70%) of the respondents are purchasing organic food products are whenever need.

Table 8
Source of purchase of organic products

Sl. No.	Source of purchase	Number of respondents	Percentage
1	Specialized shops	57	29.53
2	General shop	77	39.90
3	Online purchase	32	16.58
4	All above sources	27	19.99
	Total	193	100

Source : Primary data

The above table shows the source of purchase of organic products, out of 193 sample respondents, fifty seven (29.53%) respondents are buying organic food products at specialized shops. Seventy seven (39.90%) respondents are buying organic food products at general shops. Thirty two (16.58%) respondents are buying organic food products at online purchase and remaining twenty seven (19.99%) respondents are buying organic food

products from all above sources. Majority (39.90%) of the respondents are buying organic products at general shops.

HYPOTHESIS

The socio economic profile of the respondents do not influence the buying behaviour of organic food products at 5% significant level.

CHI SQUARE TEST

Table 9

Socio economic factors and level of buying behaviour of organic food products

Sl. No.	Variables	Chi square calculated value	DF	P – value	Result
1	Gender	18.382	4	0.001	Significant
2	Age group	22.371	6	0.001	Significant
3	Monthly income	1.487	6	0.781	Not Significant
4	Monthly expenses	18.905	4	0.001	Significant
5	Family type	19.753	2	0.001	Significant
6	Marital status	20.840	2	0.001	Significant
7	Nature of family	17.396	4	0.001	Significant
8	Frequency of purchase	18.378	4	0.001	Significant
9	Source of purchase	22.783	6	0.001	Significant

Source : Computed data

The above table shows the chi square test results, gender (0.001), age group (0.001), monthly expenses for organic products (0.001), family type (0.001), marital status (0.001), nature of family (0.001), frequency of purchase (0.001) and source of purchase (0.001) are significantly influence the level of buying behaviour at 5% significant level. Hence, the null hypothesis has been rejected at 5% significant level.

The monthly income (0.781) do not significantly influence the level of buying behaviour at 5% significant level. Hence, the null hypothesis has been accepted at 5% significant level.

CORRELATION COEFFICIENT

Table 10

Relationship between buying behaviour and source of awareness of organic food products

		Buying behaviour	Source of awareness
Buying behaviour	Pearson Correlation	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)		
	N	193	
Source of awareness	Pearson Correlation	.844**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	
	N	193	284

****.** *Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).*

The above correlation coefficient test result shows the relationship between buying behaviour and source of awareness. The buying behaviour has positive and significant relationship with awareness. If once the buyers decided to buy the products, they start searching the products. The correlation shows the exact results at 1% significant level.

FINDINGS

The following are the findings of the study.

- Majority (62.69%) of the respondents are female.
- Majority (39.90%) of the respondents are 46 years to 60 years old.

- Majority (35.75%) of the respondent's monthly income is between Rs. 50,001 and Rs. 75,000.
- Majority (39.38%) of the respondent's monthly expenses is less than Rs. 2,000.
- Majority (54.40%) of the respondents are joint families.
- Majority (81.87%) of the respondents are married.
- Majority (45.08%) of the respondent's family members are 4.
- Majority (48.70%) of the respondents are purchasing organic food products are whenever need.
- Majority (39.90%) of the respondents are buying organic products at general shops.

SUGGESTIONS

- Government agencies, organic food producers and retailers should organize awareness campaigns highlighting the health, nutritional, and environmental benefits of organic food products. Educational programmes, exhibitions and digital marketing initiatives can improve consumer knowledge and encourage informed purchasing decisions.
- Proper certification and transparent labelling should be ensured to build consumer confidence. Clearly displaying certification logos, production details and quality standards on product packaging will help consumers distinguish genuine organic products from misleading alternatives.
- Organic food products should be made easily available through supermarkets, local grocery stores, farmers' markets, cooperative outlets and online platforms. Expanding distribution channels will improve accessibility and encourage regular purchases.
- Since high prices remain a major barrier to organic food consumption, producers and retailers should adopt competitive pricing strategies. Government subsidies and incentives for organic farming can also reduce production costs and make organic products more affordable.
- Marketers should utilize digital media, social media influencers, health campaigns, product demonstrations and promotional offers to increase consumer interest. Attractive packaging and informative advertising can further strengthen purchase intentions.
- Government institutions should provide financial assistance, technical training and marketing support to local organic farmers. Strengthening farmer-producer organizations and cooperative marketing can improve product quality and market competitiveness.
- Retailers should maintain consistent product quality and educate consumers about organic certification procedures. Transparent business practices and quality assurance measures will enhance trust and encourage long-term customer loyalty.

CONCLUSION

Organic food products have become increasingly important due to growing concerns regarding health, nutrition, food safety and environmental sustainability. The findings of the study indicate that consumer buying behaviour is influenced by multiple factors such as health consciousness, product quality, environmental awareness, availability, pricing, certification and promotional activities. Although consumers exhibit a positive attitude towards organic food products, several barriers, including high prices, limited availability and lack of awareness, continue to restrict wider adoption. The study concludes that enhancing relationship between buying behaviour and source of awareness of organic products. Collaborative efforts among government agencies, organic farmers, retailers and marketers will play a crucial role in promoting sustainable consumption and supporting the growth of organic agriculture. The study provides valuable insights into consumer buying

behaviour towards organic food products and offers practical recommendations for improving market development. The findings will benefit producers, marketers, policymakers and consumers while contributing to the long-term growth of sustainable agriculture and healthy food consumption in Erode District.

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