

A Study On Consumer Preference Towards Organic Food Products

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How to cite this article: Chitra Devi T, C. Chitra (2024). A Study On Consumer Preference Towards Organic Food Products . *Library Progress International*, 44(3), 23624-23631

ABSTRACT

Over the past few years, there has been a noticeable shift in the pattern of food intake. Food products made from organic ingredients are growing in popularity as consumer demand is mostly motivated by personal health concerns. Food produced using practices that adhere to the rules of organic farming is referred to as organic food. It includes methods that support ecological balance, preserve biodiversity, and cycle resources. Organic foods are neither produced with the use of harmful chemical fertilizers and pesticides nor are processed using artificial preservatives, industrial solvents or synthetic food additives.

Traditional farming systems in India have been designated these days as organic farming. Growing consumer awareness of health, quality, safety, and the environment has led to a trend toward organic products and a sharp expansion of the organic sector during the past few decades. Because organic products are developed without the use of artificial pesticides and fertilizers, consumers are more likely to pay attention to them and avoid health issues. To put it simply, organic foods undergo little processing to preserve their natural constituents and are free of artificial additives, preservatives, and radiation. Organic products are produced using environmentally friendly processes and cultivation methods that take into account the characteristics of the finished product as well as the methods of production. This study tries to analyze the preference of organic food products amongst the consumer attempt is made to comprehend and investigate the elements influencing Indian consumers' purchasing decisions about organic food goods.

KEYWORDS: Organic, Environment, Food, Quality, Health.

INTRODUCTION

In India, traditional farming practices are now called as organic farming. There is an increasing awareness among consumers about health, quality and safety aspects, leading to a rise in the popularity of organic products and a significant growth in the organic sector over the recent decades. Customers are showing more interest in free-range, organic food, avoiding chemical fertilizers and pesticides to protect their health. In comparison to regular items, organic products taste naturally sweet and offer higher nutritional value, making them the healthiest option for people to consume.

The increase in the growth of world population leads the countries to make choices about the way they produce. There is a need to find out ways to provide food for the drastically growing population rate. New agricultural techniques came as a solution for mass food consumption. But the social, environmental, and economic costs of the present agricultural production and distribution process have a high impact on society, the environment and also economically. So, now there is a shift from producer's concerns like financial returns to consumer concerns like food safety and quality which are given more priority. The world is now moving towards organic agriculture by accepting it as the best sustainable practice that brings society more benefits.

Put it simply, organic foods undergo minimal processing to maintain their natural components and are free from artificial additives, preservatives, and radiation. They are produced using environmentally friendly processes and cultivation methods that consider the final product's characteristics and production techniques. "Organic farming is a system which avoids or largely excludes the use of synthetics inputs (such as fertilizers, pesticides, hormones, feed additives, etc) and to the maximum extent feasible rely upon crop rotations, crop residues, animals manures, off-farm organic waste." (USDA, 1980)

"It is a holistic production management system that promotes and enhances health of agro-ecosystem, including biodiversity, biological cycles and soil biological activity". (FAO, 2002).

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE OF ORGANIC FOOD IN INDIA

Organic farming in India has a long history, dating back thousands of years. The ancient Indian civilization practiced farming without chemical fertilizers or pesticides, utilizing cows for farming activities and their dung as excellent fertilizer for crops. With increasing population and natural disasters in the 1960s, India had to boost its food production. This led to the Green Revolution, where hybrid seeds were imported, and chemical fertilizers and pesticides replaced organic ones to meet food security demands. However, this excessive reliance on chemical inputs led to loss of soil fertility, farmer indebtedness, and health issues due to exposure to chemicals. Studies indicated that consuming organic vegetables reduced the risk of certain health conditions, promoting a shift back to organic farming practices.

UNDERSTANDING ORGANIC FOOD PRODUCTS

Organic products in India are experiencing growth in the domestic market. The increase in awareness has caused shifts in consumer's tastes and preferences, resulting in the rise in demand for organic products domestically and globally. Consumers prefer organic products over conventional products because they consider them for health concerns, chemical-free products, and about the impact of the environment as some reasons. Prevention of many illnesses thus increasing the quality of life. In the local supermarket or health food store, there are more food choices than ever before, which can often lead to confusion in determining what food choices are the healthiest. Some people are choosing organically grown foods over conventionally grown foods. The main reasons some choose to consume organically grown foods is the thought that:

They are consuming little or no pesticide residue left on produce.

They want to support an industry that is gentler and has fewer negative impacts on the environment.

They believe organically grown foods have higher levels of nutrients.

It is important for individuals to consider the health benefits and financial costs of consuming organic and natural foods. Organic foods include fruits, vegetables, grains, dairy foods, eggs, and to some extent meats and poultry. Organic foods are defined as those grown without the use of synthetic fertilizers, sewage sludge, irradiation, genetic engineering, pesticides, or drugs. Pesticides are chemical or control agents made to kill insects, weeds, and fungal pests that damage crops. In large amounts, these have been found to cause different illnesses including cancer. However, organically grown food does not necessarily mean oxygen-free.

Plants produce their natural toxins, and these can contaminate organic products, as well as the approved use of natural pesticides such as sulfur, and copper, which can also be found on the organically grown foods. When talking about animals, organically raised animals are those raised with organic feed and kept free from growth hormones and antibiotics, as well as often times treated more humanely and given better areas to roam than their non-organic counterparts.

Natural organic food has plenty of advantages when compared to non-organic food that has been processed with artificial preservatives and chemicals. Settling for these foods for everyday recipes can really assure health benefits since these are all-natural and have no harmful effects of pesticides and other chemicals. Environmental awareness, increasing interest of consumers in organic products, and the willingness to pay for organic features led to corporate interest in organic marketing, initiating major changes and innovations.

The market for organic food products in India has emerged because of the lucrative export Potential available for the producers. Moreover, most organic products are grown in India for export to the world market. The rest are sold at predetermined stores. So as the trend of organic products grows among producers, the benefits must naturally reach the local people of the country.

BENEFITS OF ORGANIC FOOD

Organic produce is fresher

Organic produce is much fresher than conventional produce. This is because non-organic products are full of preservatives that extend their shelf life. But there's nothing about organic that means it's fresher. So this is one of the best benefits of eating an organic diet.

Antibiotics are not used in organic product

Non-organic foods (mainly livestock) often contain antibiotics. When people eat foods containing antibiotics, people also consume antibiotics. This can create antibiotic-resistant strains of bacteria that can alter a person's immune system, making them unable to fight disease. But when you eat organic, there are no added antibiotics, so it's completely safe to eat.

The Environment is better off with organic products

Compared to conventional farms, organic farms conserve more water, use less energy, pollute the environment less, improve soil fertility, and lessen soil erosion. Because organic farms don't use pesticides, everyone is safer. Synthetic pesticide-using farms have the potential to harm nearby residents as well as birds and animals.

Organic Produce is more colorful

Produce that is organic tastes far better than that that is not. Because they have had time to naturally develop and mature and because no artificial chemicals have been added, they have more nutrients and much more delicious mineral and sugar structures. When you purchase organic fruits and vegetables, you are guaranteed to receive the true, full flavor of the product. Compared to non-organic fruits, organic fruits and vegetables have far better flavor.

Products made organically or poison free

To keep pests away, organic farming doesn't use any dangerous or artificial chemicals. This indicates that, in contrast to the majority of conventional farms, they are not tainted with any hazardous chemicals that might endanger consumers.

Organic Products are Free of Pesticides

Natural Products Don't Contain Any Poison To keep pests away, organic farming doesn't use any dangerous or artificial chemicals. This indicates that, in contrast to the majority of conventional farms, they are not tainted with any hazardous chemicals that might endanger consumers. Pesticides Are Absent from Organic Products Human health can be seriously harmed by pesticides. Although they work well to keep pests away from fruits and vegetables, they are artificial substances that are not meant for human consumption. Pesticides are present in almost all non-organic fruits and vegetables, some of which even have extremely high pesticide concentrations, which could be dangerous for consumers. Consuming even minute amounts of pesticide residue for each meal (assuming all of your produce has been exposed to pesticides) can be dangerous.

Organic Products Have More Antioxidants

Antioxidants are well known to have a very positive effect on human health. Antioxidants from organic food are even healthier, as numerous studies have demonstrated. This is because eating non-organic food can cause its antioxidant value to decrease. On the other hand, eating organic fruit and vegetables ensures that you receive the full range of antioxidant benefits when consuming your produce.

IMPORTANCE OF ORGANIC FOOD PRODUCTS

Organic products friendliness to the environment

Environmentalism, alternative medicine, vegetarianism are means of an alternative lifestyle, and organic consumption is also related to it. Production of organic food is without herbicides; pesticides; antibiotics; chemical fertilizers and growth hormones. Consumers are ready to pay more prices for organic food products, which are environment friendly, and this is because of the consumer's ecological friendly behavior. As per the research, Spanish consumers illustrated that Genetically Modified food have no special benefits, considered as tampering with nature and having high risk. On the contrary, Organic food has a good purpose; it is healthy and friendly to the environment.

Trust in product certification and labels

As per a research conducted in urban Greek areas, issues including food quality & security, trust in certification, and sometimes, the brand name had a bigger correlation with the willingness to pay than price or sociodemographic variables. The main constraint to buying organic food is high premium prices, lack of information, trust in organic certification quality, and systems. The lesser availability of organic food also leads to the lack of purchase of organic food. Per the report by Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), 14000 tonnes of organic food produce comes from certified organic farms in India. But there are more organic farm areas than what FAO mentions. Sometimes, Organic food is not recognized even though it's grown organically as farmers have not registered their name or paid the registration charges for the official certification.

PROCESS OF ORGANIC FARMING

Organic farming functions on several stages and has established some innovative ways of growing crops which in today 's scenario is becoming a popular practice. The process that makes food organic consists of various stages. These stages are discussed below:

Production- This is at the groundwork level, starting with plantation of a seed, cultivating it till the level it is grown completely and in the last reaping it.

Post-harvest processing- The process of post-harvesting comprises of multiple stages like sorting, organizing, preserving, and warehousing the food in healthy and hygienic environment which safeguard it from getting spoiled.

Packaging- After the storage, the fresh produce of the farms or whole granules is packed either at their farm or at any other packing units, where ownership and responsibility has been transferred to the concerned packer. It is at this stage where authenticity of food product is regulated and protected.

Processors- For ensuring that information or other claims on the packing are accurate and correct, processors maintain proper control, regular inspection and certification is done by competent authorities.

Contract processing- The real, on-farm costs of production is not the only reason for high prices of organic foods. The high cost of post-harvest handling, packaging, Certification, sale and distribution cost can be accounted for high prices of organic food. The costs at these stages are high primarily because of producing relatively small volume of organic products which results in diseconomies of scale. The price of organic food can be reduced to an extent if the production of these food products increases. Moreover, the production can only be increased when there is an increase in the demand for organically produced food products. Organic market is limited, therefore there is scarcity of accurate data on the organic market and, its accuracy varies with the source of its collection.

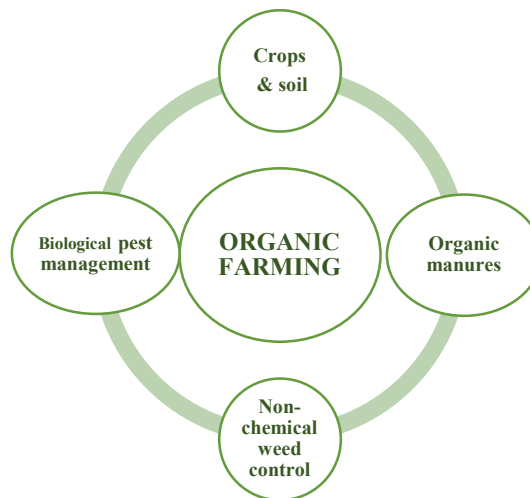
ORIGIN OF ORGANIC FARMING

"Organic" originates from the Greek word "bios," meaning to give life or a way of living. The term "organic food products" was coined in the 1940s, referring to food grown, raised, stored, or processed without synthetic chemicals, fertilizers, herbicides, pesticides, fungicides, or genetic modification. Organic food products result from organic farming, which is a system free from chemical pesticides, fertilizers, herbicides, synthetic chemicals, food growth regulators, and genetic modifications. This method aims to maintain the quality and purity of the food produced, considering environmental, health, and taste concerns of consumers.

ORGANIC FARMING

An agricultural method known as "organic farming" makes use of biological pesticides and fertilizers derived from plant or animal waste. The practice of organic farming was really developed as a response to the harm that synthetic fertilizers and chemical pesticides were causing to the environment. Stated differently, organic farming represents a novel approach to farming or agriculture that restores, preserves, and enhances the natural equilibrium.

COMPONENTS OF ORGANIC FARMING



Crops and soil

Organic farming system encourages the use of crop rotations and manures to maintain soil fertility. Green manuring and intercropping with legume is important aspect for biological farming systems. It not only reduces the weeds but reduces leaching of nutrients and soil erosion.

Organic manures

Organic material such as FYM, biogas slurry, compost, straw, crop residues, green manures and cover crops are good substitutes for inorganic fertilizers. Likewise, seaweeds, fish manure, alkaline slag and rock phosphate have also proven to be better. Organic material helps in improving physic chemical properties of soil. It reduces soil erosion. Crop rotation and green manuring are known to be improve soil fertility.

Non-chemical weed control

Weed control is one of the biggest concerns in organic farming, as the use of herbicides is strictly prohibited due to environmental pollution. Crop rotations, green manuring, manure management, tillage generally used to prevent weeds. In addition, mechanical and thermal methods are also used for weed control.

Biological pest management

Control of insect pests and pathogens is a challenging job in organic farming. Protecting natural enemies of pests is important to minimize the use of chemical pesticides and prevent the spread of pesticide-resistant pests. Botanical insecticides derived from neem and parasites such as Trichoderma, Bacillus

thuringiensis and NPV (Nuclear Polyhedrosis Virus) are used to control pests.

PRINCIPLES OF ORGANIC FARMING

These are the four principles of organic farming are mentioned below

Principle of health: Organic agriculture should sustain and enhance the health of soil, plant, animal, human and planet as one and indivisible. Healthy soils produce healthy crops that foster the health of animals and people. Health is the wholeness and integrity of living systems. The role of organic agriculture, whether in farming, processing, distribution, or consumption, is to sustain and enhance the health of ecosystems and organisms from the smallest in the soil to human beings

Principle of ecology: Organic agriculture cycles, work with them, emulate them and help sustain them. This principle agriculture within living ecological systems. It states that production is to be based on ecological processes, and ecology of the specific production environment. Organic management must be adapted to local conditions, ecology, culture and scale. efficient management of materials and energy in order to maintain and improve environmental quality and conserve resources. It should attain ecological balance through the design of farming systems, establishment of habitats and maintenance of genetic and agricultural diversity.

Principle of fairness: Organic Agriculture should build on relationships that ensure fairness regarding the common environment and life opportunities. This principle emphasizes that those involved in organic agriculture should conduct human that ensures fairness at all levels and to all parties traders and consumers. It aims to produce a sufficient supply of good quality food and other products. Natural and environmental should be managed in a way that is socially and ecologically just and should be held in trust for future generations. Fairness requires systems of production, distribution and trade that are open and equitable and account for real environmental and social costs.

Principle of care: Organic Agriculture should be managed in a precautionary and responsible manner to protect the health and well environment. Organic agriculture is a living and dynamic system that responds to internal and external demands and conditions. This principle states that precaution and responsibility are the key concerns in agriculture.

USES OF ORGANIC FARMING ORGANIC FARMING

Nutritional, poison-free and tasty food: The nutritional value of food is largely a function of its vitamin and mineral content. In this regard, organically grown food is dramatically superior in mineral content to that grown by modern conventional methods. A major benefit to consumers of organic food is that it is free of contamination with health harming chemicals such as pesticides, fungicides and herbicides. There are reasonably consistent findings for higher nitrate and lower vitamin C contents in conventional vegetables. Several studies indicate that 10-60 percent more healthy fatty acids and omega-3 fatty acids occur in organic dairy. In crops, vitamin C ranges 5-90 percent more and secondary metabolites 10-50 percent more in organic. Also, less residues of pesticides and antibiotics are present. organic food contains higher minerals and dry matter and 10-50 percent higher phytonutrients. Decreased cell proliferation of cancer cells was observed on extracts of organic strawberries. The Parsifal study showed 30 percent less eczema and allergy complaints and less bodyweight among 14 000 children fed with organic and biodynamic food in five EU countries. In animals, organic feed leads to increased fertility and increased immune parameters. Other studies indicate that the most systematic differences between organic and conventional crops are the contents of secondary metabolites Organically grown food tastes better than that conventionally grown. The tastiness of fruit and vegetables is directly related to its sugar content, which in turn is a function of the quality of nutrition that the plant itself has enjoyed. This quality of fruit and vegetable can be empirically measured by subjecting its juice to brix analysis, which is a measure of its specific gravity (density). The brix score is widely used in testing fruit and vegetables for their quality prior to export. Organically grown plants are nourished naturally, rendering the structural and metabolic integrity of their cellular structure superior to those conventionally grown. As a result, organically grown foods can be stored longer and do not show the latter's susceptibility to rapid mold and rotting.

Lower growing cost: The economics of organic farming is characterized by increasing profits via reduced water use, lower expenditure on fertilizer and energy, and increased retention of topsoil. To add to this the increased demand for organic produce makes organic farming a profitable option for farmers.

Enhances soil nourishment: Organic farming effectively addresses soil management. Even damaged soil, subject to erosion and salinity, are able to feed on micro-nutrients via crop rotation, inter-cropping techniques and the extensive use of green manure. The absence of chemicals in organic farming does not kill microbes which increase nourishment of the soil. Biodynamic farms had better soil quality: greater in organic matter, content and microbial activity, more earthworms, better soil structure, lower bulk density, easier penetrability, and thicker topsoil agricultural productivity doubled with soil fertility techniques: compost application and introduction of leguminous plants into the crop sequence.

More energy efficiency: More energy growing organic rice was four times more energy efficient than the

conventional method Organic agriculture reduces energy requirements for production systems by 25 to 50 percent compared to conventional chemical-based agriculture .

Carbon sequestration: German organic farms annually Carbon sequestration: sequester 402 kg Carbon/ha, while conventional farms had losses of 202 kg

Less water pollution: in conventional farms, 60 per Less water pollution: cent more nitrate are leached into groundwater over a 5-year period .

Environment- practices: The use of green pesticides such as neem, compost tea and spinosad is environment-friendly and non-toxic. These pesticides help in identifying and removing diseased and dying plants in time and subsequently, increasing crop defense systems. Organic farms' biodiversity increases resilience to climate change and weather unpredictability .Organic agriculture reduces erosion caused by wind and water as well as by overgrazing at a rate of 10 million hectare annually .

Organic farming is a source for productive labour: Organic farming is a source for productive labour: Agriculture is the main employer in rural areas and wage labour provides an important source of income for the poor. Thus, by being labour intensive, organic agriculture creates not only employment but improves returns on labour, including also fair wages and non-exploitive working conditions. New sources of livelihoods, especially once market opportunities are exploited, in turn revitalize rural economies and facilitate their integration into national economies.

LIMITATIONS OF ORGANIC FARMING

Lower productivity: An organic farm cannot produce as much yield as a conventional or industrialized farm. A 2008 survey and study conducted by the UN Environmental Program concluded that organic methods of farming result in small yields even in developing areas, compared to conventional farming techniques. Though this point is debatable as the productivity and soil quality of an industrialized farm decreases rapidly over the years.

Requires s Requires skill: An organic farmer requires greater understanding of his crop and needs to keep a close watch on his crops as there are no quick fixes involved, like pesticides or chemical fertilizers. Sometimes it can be hard to meet all the strenuous requirements and the experience to carry out organic farming.

Time-consuming: Significant amounts of time and energy are required to execute the detailed methods and techniques that are required for a farm to be called an organic farm. Failure to comply with any of these requirements could result in loss of certification, which the farmer will not be able to regain in up to three years. And it can be more time-consuming. Organic farming increases soil fertility by way of compost, and organic fertilizers and mulch. Organic fertilizers tend to be slow-release. As with control by botanicals, horticultural oils, and insecticidal soaps, organic fertilizers may need several applications before the desired results are brought about.

More labour intensive: It can be more for organic farming considers biological, cultural and mechanical responses to production challenges. It focuses on plant and soil health through proper aeration, drainage, fertility, structure and watering. So there's more above and below ground grunt work involved.

Organic farming methods aren't as established and widespread - yet - as conventional production. So organic control by botanicals such as pyrethrin can be more expensive than conventional controls by the longer established, more available, and wider ranging artificial, commercial, synthetic chemical pesticides.

Organic farming also requires a lot more inputs and more red-tape than conventional farming because certain practices must be met in order for a farm to retain the organic label. If anything slips, then the farm loses organic certification just like that.

CURRENT SCENARIO AND FUTURE PROSPECTS

Farmers and consumers are now refocusing on organic food, with many Indian states aiming for full organic farming in the coming years. The government has allocated land for organic farming since 2004, and India hosts more than 30% of the world's organic producers. International organizations like the International Fund for Agriculture and Development (IFAD) are supporting India's transition towards organic agriculture, highlighting the potential benefits for both farmers and consumers.

ORGANIC MARKETS

Organic Store

Using a unique strategy to stand out from the market, you can create a retail store for a wide audience. Focus on collection, pricing and marketing strategies.

2. Organic beauty shop

Herbal and organic beauty products are winning in the market. If you are interested in beauty/skin care segment and ingredients, you can check out this unique business idea.

3. Organic Supplement Store

People are becoming more and more health conscious and are more inclined to use Ayurvedic supplements than allopathic medicines. You must have proper education, certifications and license to start this business.

This is one small business idea that has great potential in the market.

4. Organic Online Store

Online stores are everywhere. You can create your own brand and have an attractive list of organic products that you want to sell. Optimize your store for versatile product selection and easy discovery. Try to work with different suppliers, wholesalers and retailers to provide the best products.

5. Become an exclusive seller of organic products on Amazon / Flipkart

If you make organic products (soaps, shampoos, snacks etc.) at home, you can boost your efforts by becoming a seller on Amazon / any e-commerce platform. This is one of the best small business ideas with low investment cost and high profit.

Start an organic coffee shop

A farm-to-table coffee shop is a unique business idea that you can explore. Offer customers a creative and attractive menu. Enjoy interesting and delicious salads, juices, sandwiches, desserts made from fresh organic products. You may have to burn money initially to gain traction. If you become popular, you can get incredible profits.

Create an organic restaurant on wheels

Create a food truck that sources local organic produce for the menu. For starters, you can offer healthy breakfast, lunch and dinner at an affordable price for people looking for healthy options. Setting up a food truck is more cost effective and flexible than setting up a restaurant.

Start an ecological restaurant chain

You can create a unique restaurant that promotes ecological products and offers fresh and healthy organic food. Stand out in the market and it can become a successful business. There are many side effects of using chemical products on the skin and people understand this. Organic skin care products are gaining a lot of traction in the market and the industry is growing rapidly, ~25% per year. Starting a small salon that uses only organic products in all services is a great business idea.

Organic Pet Food Store

The pet market in India is huge. You can tap into this market by setting up shop that sells organic pet food. Research shows that pet owners today prefer organic and natural alternatives to non-organic for their pets. This is the best business to start with little money.

Organic Shop

Organic clothing is famous. Customers are more aware of the choice of chemical-free and environmentally friendly fabrics. You can work with weavers, wholesalers and retailers and create your own shop.

CONCLUSION

The use of organic products is growing in popularity these days due to a shift in eating habits. Customers are willing to buy organic products because they are healthier and produced with natural pesticides. This study shows that consumers' perceptions and preferences for organic products are influenced by their perceived health benefits. Additionally, it was found that consumers exhibited positive behavior and awareness regarding the purchase of organic products. Thus, the research also indicates that in order to grow the size of the product market, marketers must encourage the availability of organic products and encourage consumers to learn about the advantages of the products.

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