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Consumer Behavior toward Organic Food Products: A Study from Udaipur, India

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Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration among all authors. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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ABSTRACT

The growing awareness of health and environmental sustainability has increased interest in organic food consumption. This study was conducted in Udaipur to analyse consumer behaviour towards organic food products. One hundred respondents were randomly selected from various colleges of

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MPUAT, Udaipur, Rajasthan, and data were collected through a structured Google Form based on a modified, tailor-made questionnaire. The study employed descriptive statistical tools, including Mean, Standard Deviation (SD), Mean Per Score (MPS), and ranking. The findings revealed a high level of awareness regarding organic food products, with 92% of respondents reporting familiarity. Health benefits, environmental concerns, and quality assurance influenced purchase behaviour. Most respondents (86%) purchased organic products, particularly vegetables, grains, and fruits, with local stores and farmers' markets being the most common sources. However, price sensitivity and availability were significant concerns. While many were willing to pay a premium for organic products, a substantial number also expressed that such purchases affected their family budgets. The independent variables like level of education, number of family members and Monthly income were positively significant, and occupation was negatively significant.

The study concludes that while there is a strong awareness and positive perception of organic products among the student population, affordability and accessibility remain barriers to broader adoption. Strategic awareness campaigns and policy interventions could further promote organic food consumption. The finding implies the need for strategic awareness campaigns, improvement in supply chain and policies related to organic food so that organic food become more affordable and accessible. Future research could explore impacts of awareness programme, consumer trust in certification of organic products to bridge the gaps.

Keywords: Organic food; food safety; food products; organic food market; organic farming.

1. INTRODUCTION

The organic food market, often viewed as a symbol of health, sustainability, and responsible consumption, has witnessed significant global growth in recent years. This expansion is primarily driven by increasing consumer awareness of organic products' health and environmental benefits. The demand for organic food in India is rapidly rising, particularly among health-conscious individuals who are increasingly seeking chemical-free and eco-friendly alternatives to conventionally produced food. This shift in consumer preference is not limited to developed countries but is also evident in developing economies such as China and India (Patel *et al.,* 2007). Factors fuelling this demand include growing concerns over food safety, environmental sustainability, and the desire for a healthier lifestyle. Research indicates that organic foods often contain higher nutrient content and lower pesticide residues (Lu *et al.,* 2006; Asad, *2021;* Baranski *et al.,* 2014; Ellis *et al.,* 2006). Moreover, organic farming contributes positively to the environment by improving soil quality and promoting biodiversity (Tuck *et al.,* 2014; Ponisio *et al.,* 2015).

India's organic food market was valued at ₹22 billion in 2021 and is projected to reach ₹64 billion by 2025 (Minhas, 2024). This growth has been further accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic, which has heightened consumer focus on health and immunity. Demographically, regular organic food consumers tend to be female, well-educated, physically active and belong to higher-income groups (Baudry et al., 2015).

Despite its promising outlook, organic farming in India faces several challenges. These include higher production costs, lower crop yields, and limited awareness and expertise among farmers. Organic products are typically priced higher than their conventional counterparts, making them less accessible to low-income groups.

To address these challenges, regulatory bodies like the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) have introduced certification systems such as the Participatory Guarantee System (PGS) and the National Programme for Organic Production (NPOP) to ensure authenticity and build consumer confidence. With appropriate policy support and investment in farmer training, research, and infrastructure development, organic farming can enhance rural livelihoods and contribute significantly to India's sustainable agriculture and environmental conservation goals.

2. METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted at Maharana Pratap University of Agriculture and Technology (MPUAT), Udaipur, in 2024. One hundred respondents were selected randomly from various constituent colleges under MPUAT to ensure a representative sample. Data were collected using a structured Google Form

developed based on a tailor-made questionnaire. This questionnaire was slightly modified to suit the objectives of the study. The Google Form was disseminated to the selected students electronically. The collected data were subjected to appropriate statistical analyses. Descriptive statistics such as Mean, Standard Deviation (SD), Mean Per Score (MPS) and Multiple Regression analysis were calculated. Additionally, the responses were ranked based on the MPS values.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Personal Profile

The demographic profile of the respondents reveals diverse backgrounds, providing a comprehensive understanding of consumer behaviour towards organic food products. Out of the 100 respondents, a majority were male (73%), while 27% were female. Regarding marital status, the sample was predominantly unmarried (91%), with only 9% of the respondents being married. This aligns with the target group, which primarily consisted of students. In terms of educational qualification, most of the respondents were graduates (44%), followed by postgraduates (24%), individuals with professional degrees (18%), higher secondary (12%), and a small percentage with only high school education (2%). This indicates that the respondents were generally well-educated, which may influence awareness and attitudes toward organic food consumption.

Family type analysis showed that 65% of the respondents belonged to nuclear families, while 35% were from joint families. This distribution suggests a greater representation of individuals from modern nuclear family setups. Considering the size of the family, 43% of respondents belonged to medium-sized families (5–6 members), 31% to small-sized families (up to 4 members), and 26% to large-sized families (more than six members).

Regarding the number of earning members in the family, 48% had only one earning member, 32% had two earning members, and 20% had more than two. This data reflects moderate income dependency patterns within the families. Regarding annual income, most respondents (67%) reported a medium income level, while 17% and 16% belonged to low and high-income groups, respectively. This suggests that most respondents come from economically moderate backgrounds.

As for the place of residence, 57% of the respondents resided in rural areas, followed by 24% in semi-urban areas and 19% in urban settings. This indicates a higher participation of rural students, which could influence perceptions and accessibility to organic food products (Kaur & Mogra, 2025).

The findings indicate a high level of awareness regarding organic food products among the respondents. A significant majority (92%) reported being aware of organic food, while only 8% were not familiar with the term. When asked about their understanding of the term "organic," 39% associated it with being chemical-free, 24% with eco-friendliness, 16% with health benefits, and 9% with sustainability. Notably, 12% recognised organic food as encompassing all these attributes, reflecting a well-rounded understanding among a subset of respondents.

In terms of the source of initial information, friends and family were the most common influencers (46%), followed by social media (36%), health professionals (12%), and advertisements (6%). This highlights the importance of personal networks and digital platforms in shaping consumer awareness. A large proportion (87%) believed that organic products are better for health, 8% disagreed, and 5% remained uncertain. Similarly, 85% agreed that organic products are environment-friendly, underscoring a strong perception of sustainability associated with organic goods.

Regarding nutritional value, 77% of respondents acknowledged that organic foods have higher nutritional content. Meanwhile, 13% were uncertain, and 10% were unaware of this benefit. This suggests that while a majority are informed, there is still a need for broader educational outreach.

Awareness about the production process of organic food was also relatively high, with 79% stating they knew how such products are produced. However, 15% indicated a lack of knowledge, and 6% were unsure.

Regarding organic certification, 74% were aware of its existence, 18% did not know, and 8% were unsure. Awareness slightly decreased when asked about specific certification agencies, with 66% indicating familiarity, 33% unaware, and 1% uncertain.

Table 1. Personal profile of the respondents

n= 100

S. No.	Parameters	F
A.	Gender	
1.	Male	73
2.	Female	27
Total		100
B.	Marital Status	
1.	Married	9
2.	Unmarried	91
Total		100
C.	Educational Qualification	
1.	High School	2
2.	Higher Secondary	12
3.	Graduate	44
4.	Postgraduate	24
5.	Professional Degree	18
Total		100
D.	Occupation	
1.	Students	100
E.	Type of Family	
1.	Nuclear	65
2.	Joint	35
Total		100
F.	Number of Family Members	
1.	Up to 4 (Small Size)	31
2.	5–6 (Medium Size)	43
3.	More than 6 (Large Size)	26
Total		100
G.	Earning Members	
1.	Only One	48
2.	Two	32
3.	More than Two	20
Total		100
H.	Annual Income	
1.	Low	17
2.	Medium	67
3.	High	16
Total		100
I.	Place of residence	
1.	Urban	19
2.	Semi-Urban	24
3.	Rural	57
Total		100

F= Frequency, n= Number

Finally, when asked about the safety of organically cultivated produce compared to conventional products, 77% believed organic options were safer, 13% disagreed, and 10% were uncertain. This reflects a positive consumer perception of the safety and quality of organic food. (Kaur & Mogra, 2025).

The study reveals that most respondents (86%) actively purchase organic food products, indicating a positive inclination towards healthier and more sustainable food choices. Only 14% reported not purchasing organic products, suggesting limited resistance among the surveyed group.

Among the buyers, 51% indicated purchasing all organic food categories, including fruits, vegetables, and grains. Vegetables (20 %) and grains (16 %) were also purchased as individual

categories, while 7% opted specifically for organic fruits. This suggests that vegetables are the most commonly sought-after organic items, potentially due to higher daily consumption and health considerations.

Regarding purchase frequency, 25% reported buying organic products daily, 18% purchased weekly, and 17% every month. A significant portion (33%) purchased occasionally, indicating that while regular use is every day, there is room to increase consistent consumption. Only 7% indicated rare purchases.

Regarding the place of purchase, local stores (36%) emerged as the most common source, followed by farmers' markets (25%) and supermarkets (16%). Online platforms (14%) and organic speciality stores (9%) were less frequented, indicating a preference for accessible and possibly trusted physical marketplaces.

Health benefits were the primary motivation for buying organic products, as cited by 68% of respondents. Quality assurance through certifications (20%) and environmental concerns (6%) were secondary motivators, while brand reputation and peer/family influence were less significant. This underscores the role of health consciousness in driving organic food demand.

Table 2. Awareness of organic products among respondents

n=100

S. No.	Statements	F
1.	Are you aware of organic Food products?	
1.	Yes	92
2.	No	8
Total		100
2.	What do you understand by the term "organic"?	
1.	Chemical-free	39
2.	Eco-friendly	24
3.	Sustainable	9
4.	Healthier	16
5.	All	12
Total		100
3.	How did you first learn about organic products?	
1.	Social media	36
2.	Friends/Family	46
3.	Advertisements	6
4.	Health Professionals	12
Total		100
4.	Do you believe organic products are better for health?	
1.	Yes	87
2.	No	8
3.	Maybe	5
Total		100
5.	Do you think organic products are environment-friendly	
1.	Yes	85
2.	No	6
3.	Maybe	9
Total		100
6.	Do you know that organic food products have high nutritional Values?	
1.	Yes	77
2.	No	10
3.	Maybe	13
Total		100
7.	Do you know how organic food products are produced?	
1.	Yes	79
2.	No	15
3.	Maybe	6
Total		100

S. No.	Statements	F
8.	Do you know about the organic certification?	
1.	Yes	74
2.	No	18
3.	Maybe	8
	Total	100
9.	Do you know about agencies of organic certification?	
1.	Yes	66
2.	No	33
3.	Maybe	1
Total		100
10.	Do You think organically cultivated produce is safer than conventional products?	
1.	Yes	77
2.	No	13
3.	Maybe	10
Total		100

F= Frequency, n= Number

Table 3. Purchase behaviour of customers for organic food products

n=100

S. No.	Statement	F
1.	Do you purchase organic products?	
1.	Yes	86
2.	No	14
3.	Maybe	0
	Total	100
	Purchase Behaviour	
2.	If yes, which organic food products do you purchase?	
1.	Fruits	7
2.	Vegetables	20
3.	Grains	16
4.	Fruits, Vegetables	5
5.	Vegetable Grains	1
6.	All above	51
	Total	100
3.	How often do you purchase organic products?	
1.	Daily	25
2.	Weekly	18
3.	Monthly	17
4.	Occasionally	33
5.	Rarely	7
	Total	100
4.	Where do you usually buy organic products?	
1.	Local Stores	36
2.	Supermarkets	16
3.	Online Platforms	14
4.	Organic Specialty Stores	9
5.	Farmers' Markets	25
	Total	100
5.	What motivates you to buy organic products?	
1.	Health Benefits	68
2.	Environmental Concerns	6
3.	Quality Assurance (Certifications)	20
4.	Brand Reputation	4
5.	Peer/Family Influence	2
	Total	100

S. No.	Statement	F
6.	What factors influence your decision to buy organic products?	
1.	Price	19
2.	Quality	54
3.	Availability	14
4.	Packaging	2
5.	Brand	4
6.	Certifications (e.g., Eco Mark, AGMARK)	7
	Total	100
7.	How much are you willing to spend on organic products compared to non-organic products?	
1.	10–20% More	34
2.	20–30% More	35
3.	30–50% More	13
4.	Above 50% More	18
	Total	100
8.	How much Expensive organic food products are?	
1.	Too Much Expensive	23
2.	Expensive	46
3.	Average priced	29
4.	Not Expensive	2
	Total	100
9.	Buying organic food products affects family budget?	
1.	Strongly Agree	17
2.	Agree	40
3.	Neutral	32
4.	Disagree	9
5.	Strongly Disagree	2
	Total	100
10.	What would encourage you to buy more organic products?	
	Lower Prices	16
	Better Availability	54
	More Awareness Campaigns	21
	Government Subsidies	9
	Total	100

F= Frequency, n= Number

Table 4. Multiple regression analysis between awareness of organic food products with profile of the students

S. No.	Independent Variables	Regression Coefficients	Standard Error	"t" Value
1.	(Constant)	11.740	1.888	6.217
2.	Gender	-0.859	0.520	-1.652
3.	Marital Status	-0.062	0.861	-0.073
4.	Level of Education	0.820	0.272	3.018**
5.	Occupation	-2.895	0.802	-3.607**
6.	Type of Family	-1.104	0.598	-1.845
7.	Number of Family Members	1.318	0.403	3.269**
8.	Number of Earning Members in the Family	0.555	0.300	1.848
9.	Monthly Family Income (in INR):	0.000	0.000	1.914*
10.	Place of Residence	-0.544	0.312	-1.744

R^2 – 0.328, Adjusted R^2- 0.261,
***= 0.01 Level of Significance,*
**= 0.05 Level of Significance*

When evaluating influencing factors, product quality (54%) was the most critical, followed by price (19%) and availability (14%). Other factors like certifications, branding, and packaging played a minimal role, highlighting that consumers prioritise tangible attributes over marketing or branding cues.

Price sensitivity was evident, with 34% of consumers willing to pay 10–20% more for organic products and 35% willing to pay 20–30% more. Notably, 18% were willing to pay over 50% more, suggesting a niche but strong commitment among specific consumers.

However, cost remains a concern, with 46% perceiving organic food as “expensive” and 23% describing it as “too much expensive.” Only 2% felt it was “not expensive,” reflecting a general perception of higher costs associated with organic goods.

The impact on household budgets was mixed: 17% strongly agreed, 40% agreed that purchasing organic products affects their family budget, while 32% remained neutral. Only 11% disagreed or strongly disagreed, confirming that affordability is a barrier for many.

Finally, better availability (54%) was cited as the top factor that would encourage increased purchases, followed by more awareness campaigns (21%) and lower prices (16%). Government subsidies (9%) were the least mentioned but still relevant, highlighting the potential role of policy in promoting organic consumption (Kaur & Mogra, 2025).

It could be observed from the Table 4 that the independent variables with Awareness of organic food products on multiple linear regression analysis gave R^2 (Coefficient of Multiple determination) Value of 0.320. This means that 32.80 per cent of the student’s total variation in awareness of organic food products was contributed by the selected independent variables. The independent variables like level of education, number of family members and Monthly income were positively significant, and occupation was negatively significant. The higher education may lead to higher awareness about organic food products and the number of family members may also influence awareness due to the sharing of responsibilities and expenses in large family. Occupation may also affect awareness as the level of income and working condition. The monthly income may also affect as the higher income are better positioned to afford more, invest or meet needs comfortably. While gender marital status type of family number of earning members in the family monthly income and place of residence were found non-significant. (Arun *et al.* 2023 and Yadav *et al.* 2024)

4. CONCLUSION

The present study highlights a strong awareness and positive perception of organic food products among students at MPUAT, Udaipur. Most respondents were well-informed about organic foods' health and environmental benefits and showed a favourable attitude toward their consumption. Health consciousness emerged as the primary motivator for purchasing organic products, while factors such as quality, availability, and price significantly influenced buying decisions.

Despite the willingness of many consumers to pay a premium for organic products, cost and limited accessibility remain key challenges. Additionally, concerns related to certification awareness and the impact on family budgets indicate the need for enhanced education and supportive policies.

To promote the broader adoption of organic food products, improving availability, ensuring affordability, and strengthening consumer trust through transparent certification processes are essential. Government initiatives, awareness campaigns, and infrastructural support can play a pivotal role in addressing existing barriers and encouraging sustainable consumer practices.

5. LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

1. The study was confined to Coimbatore city. Hence the generalization of the study may not hold good for the entire universe.
2. The elicited opinion of respondents may not always hold good.
3. The number of respondents is 100 only so a greater number of respondents can give more precise results.

DISCLAIMER (ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE)

We hereby declare that NO generative AI technologies such as Large Language Models (ChatGPT, COPILOT, etc.) and text-to-image generators have been used during the writing or editing of this manuscript.

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COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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