

# Study on Consumer Attitude towards Organic Food Products

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**Abstract:** *Organic food is food that undergoes minimal processing to maintain its integrity using natural methods, without the use of artificial preservatives, additives, or irradiation. There is a growing global awareness of environmental issues and their impact on biodiversity, sustainable agricultural methods, and the negative effects of chemical substances on soil, the environment, and human health. This has prompted a shift towards organic farming and the use of organic food. The concept of organic food is not novel. It is the outcome of a shifted mindset toward good dietary practices and can be regarded as a reversion to the traditional and natural eating patterns that humans have adhered to for centuries. India has a population of over 135 million people who are at danger of health issues such as diabetes, hypertension, obesity, and hormonal abnormalities. This has raised concerns and made consumers aware of the necessity of food quality and safety. This study would be valuable for those who do not consume organic products, scholars, farmers, and marketers of organic food products. It aims to uncover the factors that influence customers' attitudes towards organic food items, which in turn shape their favorable behavior and drive their intents to purchase.*

*In this particular context, the research has conducted a study on consumer behavior regarding organic food goods in Mumbai, the capital city of Maharashtra. Mumbai is the second-most populated city in India and is also known as the financial capital of the country. Due to the presence of individuals from different regions of India, the city exhibits a noticeable diversity in culture, lifestyle, and consumption patterns.*

**Keywords:** Organic food

## I. INTRODUCTION

India ranks 9th globally in terms of organic agricultural land, with a total of 650,000 organic growers. The Ministry of Commerce implemented the National Program for Organic Production [NPOP] in 2011. This program provides certification and accreditation to producers of organic food. India manufactures 1.70 million officially approved organic food items, which encompass vegetables, fruits, oilseeds, cereals, millets and pulses, dry fruits, tea and coffee, spices, and medicinal plants. The top states in India for organic food production are Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh, according to data from apeda.gov.in in 2018. Survey-based studies indicate that Indian consumers, specifically those with moderate to high income levels and advanced literacy, perceive organic food products as being healthier and of superior quality compared to conventional products. Consequently, there is a promising opportunity to enhance their willingness to pay a higher price for such products. This development has opened up excellent prospects for boosting the consumption of organic food items in India, as well as lucrative economic opportunities for entrepreneurs.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

In their study, Dangi et al. (2020) investigated the factors that influence the purchase behavior of natural food in India, a growing economy. Despite its potential, natural food still has a low market share in the country. This study aims to elucidate the influence of subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, and attitude on the purchasing intention of natural food among respondents in the Delhi-National capital district, India. This study found that subjective standards were weak and had little impact on intention. The results suggest that previous purchasing behavior, health motivation, price, trust, and awareness of organic certification labels are the main factors that encourage the purchase of natural

food. Primarily, the survey participants perceive the act of buying organic food as valuable and enjoyable. The preference for a modern appearance over traditional meals was found to have a negative impact on behavioral intention. This investigation has the potential to benefit all parties involved in the natural food sector, particularly emerging economies such as India where the natural market is still in its early stages of development. A potential motive could be to increase consumer engagement and facilitate their decision-making process in favor of natural food versus traditional food.

Agarwal P. (2019) employed the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) created by Fishbein & Ajzen to investigate the influence of customer attitude and subjective norms on purchase intentions of organic food goods in India. The components of attitude and subjective norms have been integral to the notion of reasoned action. Previous studies have incorporated elements of the theory of planned behavior, such as attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control, to examine the influence of these factors on the intention to purchase organic food. However, only a limited number of studies have explored the components of the theory of reasoned action. Therefore, conducting a study on this topic in the Indian context would be novel. This study demonstrates that attitude and subjective norms play crucial roles in determining the purchasing intention of organic food. Subjective norms hold greater significance than attitude in the Indian context, hence the organic food business and marketing specialists should prioritize the consideration of subjective norms. Subjective norms have been discovered to exert influence on individuals' attitudes regarding organic food. This appears to be a rational approach in India, as individuals often rely on the guidance of their family, friends, and colleagues. Word of mouth communication plays a significant significance in the Indian context. Advertisements should feature celebrities and prominent individuals endorsing and reaping the advantages of consuming organic food.

The key discovery of Kataria et al.'s (2019) study was that the purchasing behavior of organic food goods can be forecasted by considering customers' social norms, attitudes, and product accessibility. The accessibility of organic food goods was determined to have a greater impact on consumers' attitudes towards purchasing them than social standards. The impact of subjective norms on attitudes is typically observed in behaviors that entail ethical considerations in decision-making. Therefore, we may also link the purchase of organic food to ethical decision-making, which encompasses environmental conservation and animal welfare. The government and marketers should collaborate to enhance awareness and information, as this will effectively influence societal perspectives and foster a more positive attitude.

An empirical study conducted by Anwesha (2019) examined the awareness and consumption patterns of organic food in Bengaluru city. The study analyzed the influence of various demographic factors and the availability of organic food products in Bengaluru. The findings suggest that advertisement and promotional programs should focus on increasing awareness about the benefits of consuming organic food products. Additionally, consumers should be intentionally educated about the negative effects of non-organic food. Campaigns should be created to illustrate the potential or existing health risks associated with the toxic waste and chemicals (such as pesticides, fertilizers, and weedicides) used in the mass production of vegetables and fruits, similar to how the harmful effects of tobacco are displayed to people in movie theaters. The items should be gradually made accessible to individuals in a manner that is both convenient and cost-effective. If customers analyze and discover that the price of non-organic veggies is lower than that of organic ones, they will naturally be inclined to choose non-organic vegetables, while being aware of their negative effects. Government can play a significant role in reducing the cost of organic food. The government can implement several strategies to enhance the production, consumption, and advertising of organic food items in order to maximize public awareness.

Ditlevsen (2019) conducted a research article that examined the positive effects of organic food on health. Organic food goods in the market guarantee their freedom from contaminants found in pesticides and preservatives. Therefore, organic food manufacturers seem to meet the desire of consumers who want to eat food that is safe for their health. This study identifies three distinct interpretations of wellbeing in customers' rationale for their preference for organic food products: Health as purity; Health as pleasure, and a Holistic perspective on wellbeing. The concept of health as purity was widely acknowledged among consumers when discussing health in relation to organic eating. Initially, this viewpoint was considered a reasonable argument in favor of personal preference for organic food products. However, as the discussion delved deeper into the topic of healthy eating, it became apparent that this viewpoint lacked genuineness. During the study of healthy food, a specific focus was placed on the nutritional aspect of health,

independent of any specific context. Biomedical estimations gained significance as comprehensive arguments in the discussions.

In his study on consumer behavior towards organic food products, Darsono (2018) utilized the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) proposed by Fishbein and Ajzen. He expanded the model by incorporating knowledge about organic food as a precursor to attitude and purchase intentions. Darsono believed that in order to influence consumer behavior and meet consumer needs and desires, individuals should possess sufficient knowledge about the products they purchase and consume. The study highlights that attitude and intents play a crucial role in the selection of organic food products. These factors are favorably influenced by preset variables such as health concern, environmental concern, and product quality and expertise. Among the several factors, health is the most compelling rationale for consuming organic food.

Sharma B. In 2018, the study examined the factors that affect the purchase of organic food. The characteristics of safety, ecological concern, flavor, health, availability, price, quality, and nutrition exert effect on customers' decision to purchase organic food goods. The study reveals that health benefits, future well-being, and environmental friendliness are significant variables influencing consumers' decision to purchase organic food. The survey indicates that clients prioritize the health perspective. All attributes are evaluated by buyers at a mutually agreed upon level. If consumers are provided with further data, legitimate accessibility, and reasonable cost, the demand for these products will increase in the future.

Singh & Verma (2017) investigated the underlying mechanism that influences customers' purchasing behavior towards organic food goods. The study examines the elements that impact customers' perception of organic food. Furthermore, the study elucidates the correlation between influencing factors, customer attitude, and purchase intention for organic food goods. Previous research has indicated that customers' intention to purchase organic foods does not necessarily result in actual purchases. Hence, the study also investigates the impact of socio-demographic characteristics on real purchasing behavior. The findings indicate that four factors (health consciousness, knowledge of organic food products, subjective norms, and perceived pricing) have an impact on consumer attitudes towards organic food products, as well as influencing their intention to purchase organic foods. This study demonstrates that consumer attitudes and purchase intentions have a favorable influence on consumer actual purchasing behavior. Consumer attitude and purchase intentions serve as mediators in the interaction between influencing factors and consumer behavior. Therefore, the individual's attitude towards organic food products and their intents to purchase them are expected to influence their actual buying behavior. The study also shows that socio-demographic characteristics have an impact on the actual purchasing behavior.

In their study, Thatte et al. (2016) examined consumer behavior towards organic food in the cities of Mumbai and Thane. The organic food industry and organic farming are gaining momentum globally, and India is no exception. Several states, like Sikkim, Madhya Pradesh, and Himachal Pradesh, have made significant strides in promoting organic food products. Despite being ranked third in Organic farming, Maharashtra still falls behind in meeting the local demand for organic food items. The development of an organic food business should primarily be driven by consumer demand. Despite increasing knowledge of the detrimental effects of conventional food and its production methods, the demand for organic food is surprisingly low. This study aims to examine the factors that influence consumers' interest in organic food in the highly populated urban districts of Thane and Mumbai, located in the state of Maharashtra. The majority of customers in these cities are knowledgeable about organic food, both its advantages and the risks connected with consuming conventional food. Nevertheless, the primary factors that deter potential buyers from making a purchase are the exorbitant price and the dearth of information regarding the purchasing process and the potential risk of being deceived when it comes to organic food. In Maharashtra, good number of consumers knows about the superiority of organic food over conventional; still they found to be consuming it less. Better supply and promotional efforts are needed to encourage them to purchase organic food products. As far as Maharashtra is concerned, large number of individuals know about predominance of organic product over traditional, yet are seen as utilizing less. Amazingly the most predominant cause behind low demand is neither cost nor ignorance, however, less supply of organic product. Hence in Maharashtra, organic product utilization is seen as function of greater production and improved supply.

### III. CONCLUSION

Organic farming practices are becoming popular among Indian farmers and consumers are aware of the positive implications of the consumption of OFPs. The awareness on the harmful effects of chemicals present in food is increasing among the consumers which lead to the purchase of OFPs. In recent years, "Back to Nature" campaign is spreading in social media Platform, people wants to protect environment through consumption of environmental friendly products. The primary barrier of purchase intention towards OFPs is its high price followed by lack of awareness about organic food standards. Therefore, providing OFPs at reasonable cost and creating awareness about organic food standards and certifications among the consumers community becomes crucial. Another important barrier of OFPs is its availability at nearby stores, hence it is important to establish organic food retail stores network which enables ease access to OFPs. Farm-to-Home is another emerging concept, which also plays a key role in shaping attitude and purchase intention of consumers towards OFPs. Current study proves that the organic food products are perceived as healthy products by the consumers which strengthen their purchase intentions; consumer knowledge & environmental concerns are other critical factors affecting their attitude towards OFP. Also consumers follow others opinions (subjective norms), at the same time their own beliefs and norms while forming purchase intentions about organic food products. However existing organic food consumers are highly satisfied with their organic food consumption and majority of them want to strongly recommend it further.

It is concluded that consumer knowledge, health consciousness, environmental concern; personal norms and subjective norms have a positive influence on consumer attitude and their purchase intention towards OFPs which leads to shape up consumer behaviour towards organic food products.

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