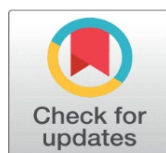
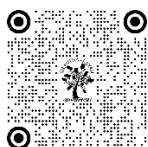


TO STUDY THE AWARENESS AND KNOWLEDGE OF CUSTOMERS FOR ORGANIC FOOD PRODUCTS

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ABSTRACT

The rising awareness of health and environmental sustainability has significantly contributed to the growing demand for organic food products. However, the level of consumer awareness and knowledge regarding these products varies widely. This study aims to assess the key factors influencing consumer awareness and understanding of organic food, including their perception of benefits, certifications, and distinctions from conventional food. A structured survey was conducted with a sample size of 107 respondents to gather insights into consumer familiarity with organic labeling, purchasing motivations, and common misconceptions. The findings highlight the impact of critical factors such as health consciousness, environmental concerns, trust in certification authorities, marketing strategies, and socio-economic influences on consumer decisions. Additionally, the study examines the role of education, media exposure, and brand credibility in shaping consumer knowledge. The results provide valuable insights for businesses, policymakers, and marketers to enhance consumer education and develop effective strategies for promoting organic food products. The study concludes with recommendations to bridge knowledge gaps and encourage informed purchasing decisions, ultimately fostering a healthier and more sustainable future.

Keywords: Organic Food, Consumer Awareness, Knowledge, Marketing Strategies, Sustainability, Health Consciousness, Purchasing Behavior, Certification Labels, Environmental Concerns, Consumer Perception

1. INTRODUCTION

The organic food market in India has witnessed significant growth in recent years, reflecting a rising consumer inclination towards health and environmental sustainability. In 2024, the market size reached approximately USD 1,917.4 million and is projected to grow at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 20.13%, reaching USD 10,807.9 million by 2033. (arcgroup.com)

This surge is driven by increasing awareness of the health benefits associated with organic products and concerns over the adverse effects of chemical pesticides and fertilizers. A study conducted in Chennai with 91 participants revealed a significant inclination towards organic products, driven by concern about food safety, environmental sustainability, and health. (ijrpr.com)

Despite this positive trend, consumer awareness and understanding of organic food products in India remain varied. Factors such as education, income, and age significantly influence awareness levels. A study focusing on Kalaburagi City

found that awareness about organic farming and conventional farming was notably higher among educated consumers with higher incomes and older age groups. (forms.iim.in)

This study aims to assess the awareness and knowledge levels among Indian consumers regarding organic food products. By conducting a structured survey with a sample size 107 respondents, the research will explore consumers' knowledge and awareness about organic foods, their recognition of certifications, and their ability to distinguish between organic and conventional products. The findings are expected to provide valuable insight for businesses, policymakers, and marketers to enhance consumer education and develop strategies that promote informed purchasing decisions, ultimately contributing to a healthier and more sustainable future.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Gracia and Magistries (2007) argued that price is a crucial element in determining consumers' attitudes towards organic food products. Their study highlighted that consumers who are inclined to consume organic foods are often willing to pay a premium for them, given their perceived health and environmental benefits.

Kaur et al. (2021) further explored this concept and concluded that health and environmental concerns significantly mitigate the higher prices associated with organic products. The study found that 72% of consumers in urban India are willing to pay higher prices for organic food due to the perceived health benefits, including reduced exposure to pesticides.

Thakur et al. (2019) examined consumer attitudes towards organic food in North India and identified price as a barrier to the adoption of organic products. Their research suggested that while urban consumers show a willingness to purchase organic food, the high cost was often a deterrent for a large section of the population.

Sharma and Jain (2020) emphasized that while price remains a significant factor, consumer awareness of organic food benefits is equally important in influencing purchasing behavior.

Kumar and Yadav (2020) explored the role of price and awareness in consumer decision-making related to organic food in urban India. Their research found that while price was a significant factor in determining consumers' attitudes, education about the health benefits of organic food increased their willingness to pay a premium.

Gupta and Sharma (2021) focused on the impact of consumer knowledge about organic certifications on their purchasing behavior. They discovered that consumers who were aware of organic certification labels, such as the National Program for Organic Production (NPOP) in India, were more likely to choose organic products, even if they were priced higher than conventional alternatives.

Reddy and Bansal (2022) conducted a study examining the relationship between organic food purchasing behavior and socio-economic factors in India. Their study found that consumers from higher income groups were more willing to accept the premium price of organic food, especially in metropolitan areas.

Patel and Kumar (2023) analyzed the challenges faced by consumers in rural and semi-urban areas of India regarding organic food. The study indicated that while consumers in these regions were aware of the benefits of organic food, the high prices, limited availability, and lack of knowledge about certification standards were significant obstacles.

2.1. OBJECTIVE

The objective of this study is To know the Awareness and Knowledge of customers for organic food products

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The primary data used in this study was collected through the survey method using a well structured questionnaire. The sample size for the purpose of the present study consisted 150 respondents. Further, the study uses purposive convenience sampling technique to collect data from the respondents. A total of 150 questionnaires were distributed, out of that 107 responses were received. Hence the final sample size which was considered for analysis purpose was 107 responses out of 150 respondents. Respondents were asked to answer 12 prepared statements.

4. RESULT AND ANALYSIS

Table 1 Demographic Profile of Respondents

S.no	Demographic	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
1	Gender	Male	59	55.14
		Female	48	44.86
2	Resident	Rural	23	21.50
		Urban	84	78.50
3	Age	Below 20 Years	7	6.54
		21-40 Years	45	42.06
		41-60 Years	37	34.58
		Above 60 Years	18	16.82
4	Educational Qualification	Higher secondary	11	10.28
		Graduate	32	29.91
		Post graduate	35	32.71
		Professional	29	27.10
5	Monthly Income	15000-30000	14	13.08
		30000-50000	51	47.66
		More than 50000	42	39.25
6	Marital Status	Married	87	81.31
		Unmarried	20	18.69

Table 2 Familiarity of organic concept

Are u familiar with organic concept?			
S. No	Response	Frequency	Percent (%)
1	Yes	58	54.21%
2	No	32	29.91%
3	Not Sure	17	15.89%
	Total	107	100%

The table presents the responses of 107 individuals regarding their familiarity with the organic concept. The analysis is as follows:

- 1) Majority Awareness:** A significant portion of respondents (58 out of 107, or 54.21%) indicated that they are familiar with the organic concept. This suggests a relatively high level of awareness among the surveyed individuals.
- 2) Lack of Awareness:** Approximately 29.91% (32 respondents) stated that they are not familiar with the concept. This indicates that while awareness is high, a substantial portion still lacks knowledge in this area.
- 3) Uncertainty:** A smaller group, constituting 15.89% (17 respondents), was unsure about their familiarity with the organic concept. This suggests the need for further education or clarification regarding what constitutes an organic concept.

Table 3 Learning about organic food product

How did you first learn about organic food products?			
S. No	Response	Frequency	Percent (%)
1	Media	15	14.02%
2	Internet and online sources	39	36.45%
3	Word-of-mouth (friends, family, colleagues)	45	42.06%
4	Health professionals or experts	5	4.67%
5	Educational institutions (schools, universities)	3	2.80%
	Total	107	100%

1) Word-of-Mouth is the Primary Source

- The majority of respondents (42.06%) first learned about organic food through word-of-mouth, including friends, family, and colleagues.
- This suggests that personal recommendations play a crucial role in spreading awareness about organic products.

2) Internet and Online Sources are Significant

- About 36.45% of respondents learned about organic food through the internet, including websites, blogs, and social media.
- This highlights the importance of digital platforms in shaping consumer awareness and choices.

3) Media's Role in Awareness

- Traditional media (TV, newspapers, and magazines) contributed to 14.02% of the responses.
- Although not as influential as personal networks or the internet, media still plays a role in educating the public.

4) Limited Influence of Experts and Institutions

- Only 4.67% of respondents learned about organic food from health professionals.
- Educational institutions had the least impact, accounting for just 2.80%.
- This indicates that formal education and expert guidance are not the primary sources of awareness in this domain.

Table 4 Confidence of Differentiation between Organic and inorganic

How confident do you feel in differentiating between organic and non-organic food products?			
S. No	Response	Frequency	Percent (%)
1	Very confident	19	17.80%
2	Somewhat confident	46	43.00%
3	Neutral	13	12.10%
4	Not very confident	21	19.60%
5	Not at all confident	8	7.50%
	Total	107	100%

1) Majority Have Moderate Confidence

A significant portion of respondents (43%) reported being somewhat confident in identifying organic food. This suggests that while they possess some knowledge, they may still struggle with distinguishing features such as certification labels and product characteristics.

2) Limited High Confidence

Only 17.8% of the respondents feel very confident about differentiating between organic and non-organic products. This indicates that a relatively small percentage of people have a strong understanding and trust in their ability to recognize organic food.

3) Uncertainty and Lack of Confidence

Approximately 27.1% of respondents either feel not very confident (19.6%) or not at all confident (7.5%) in identifying organic products. This highlights a gap in awareness, possibly due to unclear labeling, lack of information, or difficulty in recognizing organic certification symbols.

4) Neutral Respondents

Around 12.1% of participants neither feel confident nor unconfident, indicating that they may not have enough exposure or knowledge to form a strong opinion on the matter.

Table 5 Factors determining organic food product

Which factors do you consider when determining whether a food product is organic or not?			
S. No	Response	Frequency	Percent (%)
1	Organic certification labels	44	41.10%
2	Product packaging and labeling	24	22.40%
3	Price of the product	13	12.10%
4	Information from supplier/retailer	20	18.70%
5	Product appearance and quality	6	5.70%
	Total	107	100%

1) Certification Labels as the Primary Indicator

The majority of respondents (41.1%) rely on organic certification labels when determining whether a food product is organic. This suggests that official certification plays a crucial role in consumer trust, highlighting the importance of clear and standardized labeling.

2) Importance of Packaging and Labeling

Around 22.4% of respondents consider product packaging and labeling when making their decision. This indicates that well-presented packaging with clear organic claims and ingredient details influences consumer perception.

3) Price as a Consideration

Approximately 12.1% of participants take the price into account when deciding whether a product is organic. This suggests that some consumers associate higher prices with organic quality, although price alone is not a definitive indicator of organic status.

4) Influence of Suppliers and Retailers

About 18.7% of respondents depend on information from suppliers or retailers. This highlights the role of trusted vendors and stores in shaping consumer decisions regarding organic food products.

5) Visual Assessment Plays a Minor Role

Only 5.7% of respondents determine organic status based on product appearance and quality. This suggests that external characteristics alone, such as color or freshness, are not widely relied upon as indicators of organic authenticity.

Table 6 organic certification awareness

Are you aware of any specific organic certification bodies or organizations?			
S. No	Response	Frequency	Percent (%)
1	Yes	44	41.10%
2	No	41	38.30%
3	Not Sure	22	20.60%

	Total	107	100%
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1) Moderate Awareness of Organic Certification Bodies

- About 41.1% of respondents are aware of specific organic certification bodies or organizations.
- This suggests that while a notable portion of consumers recognize official organic certifiers, there is still room for increased awareness.

2) Significant Lack of Awareness

- Around 38.3% of participants responded with "No," indicating that they are not aware of any certification bodies.
- This is a substantial percentage, highlighting a knowledge gap in recognizing regulatory bodies that verify organic standards.

3) Uncertainty Among Some Respondents

- 20.6% of respondents selected "Not Sure," implying they may have heard of organic certifications but cannot confidently identify them.

Table 7 Knowledge about organic food Product

How would you rate your knowledge about organic food products on a scale of 1 to 5			
s.no	Response	Frequency	Percent
1	1 (Very Low)	3	2.8
2	2	15	14.0
3	3(Moderate)	31	29
4	4	45	42.0
5	5(Very High)	13	12.2
Total		107	100

1) Moderate to High Knowledge is Most Common

- The largest group of respondents (42.0%) rated their knowledge as 4, indicating a strong level of understanding of organic food products.
- Additionally, 29% rated themselves as 3 (Moderate), showing that nearly 71% of respondents have at least a moderate understanding of organic food.
- A smaller proportion (12.2%) rated their knowledge as 5 (Very High), which suggests that while some consumers feel very confident, it is not the majority.

2) Some Individuals Feel Less Knowledgeable

- Around 14.0% of respondents rated their knowledge as 2, indicating that a portion of the population has limited awareness of organic food products.
- A small group, 2.8%, rated their knowledge as 1 (Very Low), signaling that these individuals have little to no understanding of the topic.

5. CROSS TABULATION ANALYSIS

Table 8 Gender and Knowledge about Organic food Product

Cross Tabulation of Gender and Knowledge about Organic Food product		
	How would you rate your knowledge about organic food products on a scale of 1 to 5,	Total

		Very Low	Low	Moderate	High	Very High	
Gender	F	1	7	15	25	0	48
	M	2	8	16	20	13	59
Total		3	15	31	45	13	107

The table presents the distribution of knowledge levels about organic food products among male (M) and female (F) respondents. The total sample size is 107 individuals.

Comparative Analysis

1) Knowledge Distribution:

- More females (25) than males (20) have high knowledge, but no females have very high knowledge, whereas 13 males do.
- Males dominate at the very high level, suggesting a more polarized distribution with higher representation at both extremes.
- Both genders have similar proportions in the moderate category (15 females vs. 16 males).

2) Lower Knowledge Levels:

- A slightly higher percentage of males (10 out of 59, ~16.95%) have very low or low knowledge compared to females (8 out of 48, ~16.67%).
- This suggests a relatively equal distribution at the lower end.

Table 9 Gender and Knowledge about Organic food Product

Cross Tabulation of Educational Qualification and Knowledge about Organic Food product							
Count		How would you rate your knowledge about organic food products on a scale of 1 to 5,					Total
		Very Low	Low	Moderate	High	Very High	
	Graduate	0	3	4	22	3	32
Educational Qualification	Higher Secondary	3	1	0	2	5	11
	Post graduate	0	6	12	17	0	35
	Professional	0	5	15	4	5	29
Total		3	15	31	45	13	107

6. COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

- Higher knowledge levels (high + very high) are most common among graduates (78.1%) and postgraduates (48.6%).
- Higher secondary respondents show extreme variation, with very high (5 respondents) and very low (3 respondents) knowledge.
- Professionals have the most moderate knowledge (51.7%), indicating general awareness but not necessarily deep expertise.
- Low knowledge is more common among postgraduates (6 respondents) and professionals (5 respondents).

7. IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

- 1) Given that graduates and postgraduates exhibit a high level of knowledge about organic food, educational initiatives targeting lower education groups such as higher secondary students might need to emphasize the importance of organic products more intensively.
- 2) The study shows that professionals tend to fall in the moderate knowledge range. It suggests that further professional training or workshops could be beneficial in increasing their knowledge,
- 3) The results indicate a clear benefit to integrating organic food awareness into educational curriculums, particularly for individuals with lower qualifications. This could ensure that the next generation is equipped with the knowledge necessary to make informed choices about food consumption, promoting healthier lifestyles and supporting sustainable agriculture.
- 4) Since education alone doesn't fully explain knowledge levels, other factors such as practical exposure, media influence, and professional experiences should be explored further.
- 5) This study highlights the need for policy interventions aimed at enhancing awareness of organic food across different educational levels. Public health initiatives and agricultural policies should focus on promoting organic food knowledge through diverse channels tailored to different educational backgrounds.

8. CONCLUSION

The study reveals a clear relationship between educational qualification and the level of knowledge about organic food products. Respondents with higher educational qualifications, particularly graduates and postgraduates, show a higher propensity for stronger knowledge, with most of them reporting high levels of understanding. In contrast, respondents with higher secondary education display a more polarized distribution, suggesting that education alone may not account for knowledge levels. Professionals, although diverse in their education background, show a more balanced knowledge distribution, with a significant proportion having moderate knowledge. The overall data indicates that educational background plays an important role in shaping awareness and understanding of organic food, but other factors such as personal interest and exposure may also significantly influence knowledge levels.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

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None.

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