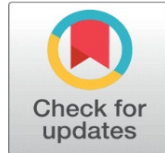
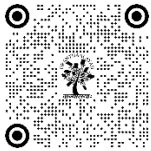


CONSUMER ATTITUDE AND PREFERENCES TOWARDS ORGANIC FOOD PRODUCTS IN CHENNAI CITY - A STUDY

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ABSTRACT

The growing awareness of health, environmental sustainability, and food safety has led to a significant rise in the demand for organic food products globally. Chennai, being a major metropolitan city, has witnessed an increased consumer inclination towards organic consumption. This study aims to analyze consumer attitudes, preferences, and buying behavior regarding organic food products in Chennai. Using a combination of primary and secondary data, the research identifies key factors influencing purchase decisions, including health consciousness, environmental concerns, availability, and price sensitivity. The findings of the study offer valuable insights for marketers, retailers, and policymakers aiming to promote organic consumption in urban areas.

Keywords: Organic Food, Consumer Attitude, Buying Preferences, Health Consciousness, Chennai, Sustainable Consumption

1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the global food industry has seen a significant shift towards organic products as consumers become increasingly concerned about health, nutrition, and the environment. Organic foods, grown without synthetic pesticides, chemical fertilizers, or genetically modified organisms (GMOs), are perceived as healthier and safer alternatives to conventional products. In India, the organic food sector is expanding rapidly, with urban centers like Chennai becoming major markets for organic produce.

Chennai, with its diverse population and growing middle class, presents a unique setting to study consumer behavior towards organic foods. Factors such as rising income levels, health awareness, environmental sustainability, and the influence of global consumption patterns have contributed to this trend. However, despite growing interest, challenges such as higher prices, limited availability, and trust issues continue to affect consumer purchasing decisions.

This study explores the underlying attitudes and preferences of consumers in Chennai regarding organic food products, providing insights that can aid businesses and policymakers in formulating strategies to promote organic consumption more effectively.

1.1. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

While the demand for organic food products is on the rise in Chennai, it remains a niche market compared to conventional food products. Factors such as higher pricing, inconsistent availability, lack of certification trust, and limited consumer awareness act as barriers to widespread adoption. Understanding the consumer psyche — their motivations, preferences, perceived benefits, and the challenges they face — is critical for the organic food industry to bridge the gap between awareness and actual purchase behavior. This study aims to identify and analyze the key determinants that influence the attitudes and preferences of Chennai consumers towards organic food products and propose solutions to overcome existing market challenges.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

1) Rana & Paul (2017)

Their research emphasized that health concerns, environmental sustainability, and food safety are major drivers for consumers choosing organic products. Price and accessibility were found to be major deterrents, especially in developing economies.

2) Singh & Verma (2019)

They observed that Indian consumers are willing to pay a premium for organic foods when there is adequate assurance of authenticity and quality. The study also pointed out the need for government regulations and certifications to enhance consumer trust.

3) Paul & Rana (2018)

Analyzing urban markets in India, they concluded that younger consumers, particularly those from higher income brackets, show a greater preference for organic products, primarily due to health consciousness and lifestyle choices.

4) Magnusson et al. (2003)

In a global context, this study indicated that personal health benefits, rather than environmental concerns, are stronger predictors of organic food consumption behavior.

5) Kushwah, Dhir, & Sagar (2019)

This study highlighted that Indian consumers' attitudes towards organic food are influenced by social factors, media, and brand trust. They emphasized the importance of marketing communication and educational campaigns to boost organic product adoption.

6) Squires, Juric, & Cornwell (2001)

They explored consumer skepticism towards organic labeling and suggested that transparency in production and certification processes can improve consumer confidence.

2.1. HYPOTHESIS

- **H1:** Consumers in Chennai have a positive attitude towards organic food products.
- **H2:** Health consciousness significantly influences the preference for organic food products.
- **H3:** Higher income groups show a stronger preference for organic products compared to lower income groups.

2.2. RESEARCH TOOLS

- **Questionnaire:** A structured questionnaire including both open-ended and closed-ended questions.
- **Survey Method:** Personal interviews and online forms.

- **Sampling Technique:** Stratified random sampling to ensure representation across different age, income, and education levels.

2.3. DATA COLLECTION METHODS

- **Primary Data:** Collected through surveys distributed to 300 consumers across various areas of Chennai city, including supermarkets, organic stores, and residential localities.
- **Secondary Data:** Gathered from journals, research papers, magazines, and websites related to organic food products and consumer behavior.

3. METHODOLOGY

- **Research Design:** Descriptive research design.
- **Sample Size:** 300 respondents.
- **Sampling Area:** Various zones in Chennai (North, South, East, and West).
- **Tools Used:** Questionnaire (Likert scale, multiple choice), interviews.
- **Analysis Techniques:** Percentages, Chi-square test, and simple correlation analysis.

3.1. DATA ANALYSIS

Table 1 Demographic Profile of Respondents

Demographic Variable	Category	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	48%
	Female	52%
Age	18-30 years	34%
	31-45 years	38%
	Above 45 years	28%
Income Level	Below ₹30,000	22%
	₹30,001–₹70,000	40%
	Above ₹70,000	38%

Table 2 Consumer Preferences for Organic Products

Product Category	Regular Purchase (%)	Occasional Purchase (%)
Fruits and Vegetables	62%	28%
Dairy Products	41%	35%
Grains and Pulses	36%	40%
Packaged Organic Snacks	29%	45%

Diagram 1: Reasons for Buying Organic Food (Pie Chart Representation)

- Health Benefits: 55%
- Better Taste: 18%
- Environmental Concern: 15%
- Prestige/Social Status: 12%

Diagram 2: Challenges in Buying Organic Food (Bar Chart Representation)

- High Price: 48%
- Limited Availability: 26%
- Lack of Trust in Certification: 16%
- Lack of Awareness: 10%

4. FINDINGS

- 1) **Positive Attitude:** Majority of consumers in Chennai are health-conscious and have a positive view of organic products.
- 2) **Health Motivation:** Health benefits are the primary reason for purchasing organic food.
- 3) **Income Influence:** Higher-income groups purchase more organic products regularly than lower-income groups.
- 4) **Major Challenge:** High cost remains the biggest barrier to regular consumption.
- 5) **Awareness Gaps:** Many consumers are unaware of organic certification standards.
- 6) **Product Focus:** Fruits, vegetables, and dairy are the most popular organic products.

5. SUGGESTIONS

- 1) **Price Reduction:** Companies should strategize to make organic products more affordable.
- 2) **Increase Awareness:** Educational campaigns about the benefits and certifications of organic foods can build greater trust.
- 3) **Expand Availability:** Retailers should ensure organic products are widely available in all parts of Chennai, including tier-2 and tier-3 zones.
- 4) **Certifications Transparency:** Clear labelling and certification displays should be enhanced to build consumer trust.
- 5) **Promotional Offers:** Discount schemes or combo packs can encourage first-time buyers.

6. CONCLUSION

The study reveals that consumers in Chennai exhibit a favorable attitude towards organic food products, primarily motivated by health consciousness. However, high pricing and lack of widespread availability restrict their regular purchase. To cater to the growing demand, businesses must focus on improving affordability, accessibility, and consumer education. With effective strategies, the organic food market in Chennai holds immense potential for growth.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

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