

Factors Affecting the Acceptability of Organic Foods in India: An Analytical Perspective

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Abstract

Several factors influence the acceptability of organic foods in India. Firstly, the awareness and understanding of organic farming practices and their benefits play a crucial role. As consumers become more conscious of health and environmental issues, they are more likely to embrace organic products. Secondly, the availability and accessibility of organic foods affect their acceptability. With an increasing number of organic food stores, farmers' markets, and online platforms, consumers have greater access to these products, making them more inclined to purchase them. Thirdly, price affordability is a significant factor. While organic foods tend to be priced higher than conventional alternatives, the willingness and ability to pay for healthier and chemical-free products vary among different consumer segments. Finally, the presence of reliable certifications and labels provides consumers with reassurance about the authenticity and quality of organic foods. Clear and standardized labelling systems enhance the acceptability of organic products by building trust and confidence among consumers. Overall, a combination of awareness, accessibility, affordability, and trust-building measures influences the acceptability of organic foods in India.

Keywords – *Organic foods, Organic farming practices, Benefits of Health, Environmental issues, Price affordability, Consumer segments, Certifications.*

Introduction

The acceptability of organic foods in India is influenced by a multitude of factors, shaping the preferences and choices of consumers. One such factor is the shifting consciousness and increased awareness of health and environmental concerns among the population. As people become more cognizant of the potential risks associated with consuming chemically treated produce, they are turning towards organic options. The desire to lead a healthier lifestyle and minimize exposure to harmful substances has led to a growing demand for organic foods. This growing awareness has been further fuelled by educational campaigns, media coverage, and the dissemination of information through various platforms. As a result, consumers are now more inclined to seek out organic foods as a means to protect their health and the environment.

Additionally, the availability and accessibility of organic foods play a pivotal role in determining their acceptability in the Indian market. There has been a substantial increase in the number of organic food stores, farmers' markets, and online platforms dedicated to offering organic items in recent years. Because of this enhanced accessibility, people can now locate and purchase organic foods more easily. Furthermore, the growth of local farmers' markets has allowed for direct engagement between farmers and consumers, building trust and openness. The ease of use of internet platforms has also aided the appeal of organic foods, allowing people to access a wide choice of items from the comfort of their own homes. The increased availability and accessibility have effectively spanned the supply-demand imbalance, making organic foods more widely accepted by Indian consumers.

Literature Review

Prakash et al. (2018) provide useful insights for organic food marketers by identifying the key elements influencing the purchasing of organic food items among young Indian consumers. Marketers may customise their tactics to successfully target and engage this specific customer demographic, hence increasing the popularity of organic foods in India, by studying consumer decision-making processes and considering the significance of environmental and health concern. From a social perspective, **Misra & Singh (2016)** highlight the negative consequences of using agrochemical-based fertilizers in farming, including the conversion of fertile land into wasteland, water pollution, and adverse effects on farmers' health. Organic farming is portrayed as a win-win solution benefiting the environment, farmers, and consumers. The originality lies in their focus on the awareness and

perception of organic food consumers in urban India after the agricultural revolution. The results have implications for organic food producers and marketing companies, providing insights into consumer beliefs and expectations. This can aid in formulating effective communication strategies and marketing policies aligned with consumer preferences, thereby contributing to the growth and acceptance of organic foods in Delhi-NCR and beyond.

Gumber & Rana (2021) provide valuable insights into the diverse types of consumers in the organic food market. By understanding the different segments, producers, sellers, and the government can tailor their marketing strategies to effectively target each group. For instance, targeting health-conscious consumers may focus on highlighting the health benefits of organic food, while addressing obstacles in buying may involve initiatives to improve accessibility and affordability. By recognizing the varying attitudes and motivations of consumers, stakeholders in the organic food industry can better cater to their needs and preferences, fostering increased acceptance and growth of organic food consumption in India. **Anand (2011)** identifies several determinants that influence consumers' food choices in India. For school and college-goers, factors such as passion for eating out, socializing, ambience, and taste play a significant role. On the other hand, convenience emerges as a crucial determinant for dual-income families in urban India. Fast food companies in India cannot solely rely on convenience as a unique selling proposition unless equal importance is given to the implications of fast food consumption on consumers' health in the future.

Yadav (2016) reveals that both altruistic and egoistic values impact the intention of young Indian consumers to buy organic food by throwing light on the influence of altruistic and egoistic values on customers' organic food purchasing intentions. This was one of the first attempts in the Indian setting to investigate the role of values, especially altruistic and egoistic values, in organic food consumption among young consumers. Given the heterogeneity in the results of **Ghai et al. (2017)** pertaining to the nutritional quality and safety of organic foods, future comparative studies should consider technological aspects along with sensory parameters. It is crucial to establish uniform standards for testing laboratories to ensure consistent and reliable results, thereby safeguarding public health and minimizing discrepancies in sampling and analysis. In India, the organic food industry lacks standardized guidelines for quality and a policy framework for the domestic and export markets. Additionally, traceability should be prioritized to eliminate fraudulent practices and enhance consumer trust.

According to **Singh and Verma (2017)**, four important elements impact customers' views towards organic food products: health consciousness, knowledge, subjective standards, and pricing. These variables have a substantial impact on customer sentiments towards organic goods. Furthermore, the study found that purchase intention for organic goods is impacted not only by these four parameters, but also by an additional one, namely availability. **Rana and Paul (2017) discovered** a substantial trend in health-conscious customers' preference for organic food over conventionally cultivated food. The increased incidence of lifestyle illnesses such as heart disease and depression can be related to this shift in consumer attitudes. Demand for organic food is predicted to rise as customers become more conscious of the influence of food on their health and quality of life. This has substantial ramifications for firms in the retail, distribution, and marketing sectors, as they must adapt to suit changing consumer wants and preferences.

According to **Arli et al. (2018)**, consumers' perceived willingness to be green modulates the impacts of attitude, perceived behavioural control, pro-environmental self-identity, and perceived feeling of responsibility on purchase intention. This suggests that customers' willingness to adopt green behaviours has a significant impact on their desire to purchase green items. According to **Yazdanpanah & Forouzani (2015)**, students' opinions were the most important predictor of their desire to purchase organic goods. This implies that students' own opinions and perceptions regarding organic food impact their shopping decisions considerably. However, perceived behavioural control and subjective standards did not influence students' propensity to purchase organic food substantially. This implies that factors such as perceived control over purchasing decisions and social norms may have less impact on students' organic food purchasing intentions in the Iranian context.

Biswas and Roy (2015) discovered that, regardless of their affinity for green products, customers in the East's growing nations, particularly India, are price sensitive. Second, social value is the most influential element encouraging sustainable consumption behaviour adoption among customers who

favour green products. Finally, the study discovered substantial disparities in consumer consumption values based on their choice for items with or without green credentials. Consumers who have prior experience with or a favourable opinion of green items have greater consumption values than those who have not yet adopted sustainable consumption practises. According to **Jaiswal and Kant (2018)**, attitudes towards green products, environmental concern, and perceived consumer effectiveness all have a strong and direct influence on green purchase intention. These characteristics also have an indirect impact on green purchasing intention due to their impact on attitudes towards green items. In this study, however, perceived environmental awareness had no significant influence on both attitude towards green items and green purchasing intention. Green buying intent is a key indicator of green purchasing behaviour.

Yadav and Pathak (2016) emphasised on examining the variables influencing the "intention to purchase" of organic food among young customers in a developing country, illuminating the acceptance of organic goods in India. In this context, they found that a number of important criteria had a big impact on how consumers viewed organic goods. The main aspect emphasised was "health consciousness." Due to its perceived health benefits, organic food was more likely to be embraced by consumers who showed higher levels of health consciousness. Natural pesticides, chemicals, and genetic alterations are frequently associated with organic goods, which is in line with the expectations of those looking to make healthy nutritional choices. The importance of one's own health and the notion that eating organic foods leads to a healthier lifestyle were key factors in young people's acceptance of organic foods. Concerns about the environment have become another significant factor influencing the uptake of organic foods. Consumers in India have shown a growing preference for organic food items due to rising environmental consciousness and sustainability. Consumers who care about the environment were convinced that organic farming practises encourage environmental sustainability, conserve natural resources, and cut down on pollution. In this situation, the eco-friendly features of organic farming and individual values congruence made organic meals more acceptable

Wee et al. (2014) assessed consumers' "perception," "purchase intention," and "actual purchase behaviour" of organic food goods. They looked at the elements that affect how well-liked organic foods are in India, paying close attention to elements like "product quality," "price affordability," and "availability." "Product quality" stood out as a significant factor. When compared to conventional alternatives, consumers thought organic foods were of greater quality. This notion was based on the idea that organic foods are produced using eco-friendly methods and are devoid of synthetic pesticides, chemicals, and genetic alterations. Consumers accepted organic foods more readily because they believed they were of higher quality and so had better taste, nutritional value, and overall satisfaction. The availability of organic food items also had an impact on how well-liked organic foods were among customers. People were more likely to adopt organic foods when they were easily accessible and readily available on the market. Access to organic foods was made easier for consumers by factors like the availability of organic food departments in supermarkets, specialty businesses selling organic foods, and internet marketplaces for organic goods. Consumer acceptance and actual purchase behaviour were impacted by the practicality and simplicity of buying organic goods. Consumers believed organic foods to be of higher quality and linked them with better flavour and nutritional value. Although consumers were willing to pay more for organic goods, price affordability was a deciding factor. Additionally, customers' approval of and actual purchasing behaviour were significantly shaped by the accessibility and availability of organic food goods.

Sharma and Singhvi (2018) assessed customers' "perception" and "behaviour" towards organic food, offering important elements influencing the adoption of organic products in India. They determined that "health consciousness," "environmental awareness," "trustworthiness of organic certification," and "perceived benefits" were some of the major influences on consumers' acceptance of organic foods. The perceived advantages of eating organic food also had a big impact on consumer acceptance. They emphasised that customers believed organic foods to be safer, healthier, and more natural than their conventional counterparts. Organic foods were more readily accepted by customers as a result of this sense of greater quality and safety. The positive perception and acceptability of organic products were influenced by the perceived benefits, such as enhanced flavour, nutritional content, and general wellbeing.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the acceptability of organic foods in India is influenced by a multitude of interconnected factors. The growing awareness and understanding of organic farming practices and their benefits have propelled the demand for organic foods as consumers prioritize their health and environmental well-being. Additionally, the availability and accessibility of organic foods have played a crucial role, with the establishment of dedicated stores, farmers' markets, and online platforms providing convenient access to a wide range of organic products. Price affordability and the ability to meet the diverse needs of different consumer segments also shape the acceptability of organic foods. Moreover, the presence of reliable certifications and labels instils trust and confidence in consumers regarding the authenticity and quality of organic products. As India continues to embrace sustainable and healthier food choices, it is crucial for stakeholders, including farmers, retailers, and policymakers, to collaborate in expanding organic farming practices, improving distribution channels, and promoting consumer education. By addressing these factors, India can further enhance the acceptability of organic foods and foster a sustainable food system that benefits both individuals and the environment.

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