

**Awareness, Attitude and Purchase Intention toward Organic Food Products**

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**Abstract:**

There has been a rising demand of organic food products as a result of the growing concern over health, food safety and the sustainability of the environment. This paper focuses on the consumer awareness level, attitude and purchase intention towards organic food products. The main aim is to know the impact of consumer knowledge and perception to their readiness of buying organic foods. The research concentrates on health consciousness, environmental concern, quality of the products, price perception, and belief in the organic certification. The paper emphasizes the need to have good awareness, labeling and better distribution channels to increase the consumption of organic foods. To promote the development of the organic food market, the consumer knowledge and the trust in the organic products could be improved considerably and this could contribute to higher purchase intention.

**Keywords:** Organic food, Consumer awareness, Attitude, Purchase intention, Health consciousness.

**Introduction**

Organic food products are in high demand in the world over the recent years. Consumers are getting more health and environmental conscious about the food they take. Organic foods are grown in the absence of synthetic pesticides, fertilizers, and genetically modified organisms and it is produced using natural farming techniques that are geared towards ensuring a balanced ecology and environmental sustainability. Rise in prevalence of lifestyle diseases and food contamination has also caused consumers to review their food consumption habits and prompt them to seek healthier and safer substitutes to food.



The consumption of organic foods has close relations with consumer awareness, attitudes, and purchase intentions. The awareness is the degree to which consumers know about the benefits and the methods of production of the organic food products. Attitude is the beliefs, feelings and perception of consumers concerning the organic food products. Purchase intention is the tendency of consumers to purchase organic foods in future. The three are closely intertwined and they have a great influence in shaping consumer behavior in the organic food market.

The organic food market has grown at a high rate in the world as people are becoming health conscious and creating awareness of the environment. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization, organic agriculture contributes to environmental sustainability by promoting soil fertility, conserving biodiversity, and reducing pollution caused by chemical inputs. Due to this, organic foods are becoming more perceived as being healthier and greener substitutes to conventional foods.

Although organic foods are increasingly gaining popularity, there are still various obstacles that are curbing their use. Consumers are often deterred to buy organic products on a regular basis by high prices, unavailability, low consumer information on organic certification, etc. As such, it is necessary that marketers, producers, and policymakers to be aware of consumer awareness, attitudes and purchase intentions to ensure that the organic food market is promoted to grow.

This paper will look at the variables that affect consumer awareness, consumer attitude, and purchase intentions of organic food products. It also discusses the contribution of marketing strategy and consumer education to the increase of the consumption of organic food.

### **Organic Food Products Concept.**

Organic food products are agricultural products which are cultivated under natural farming methods devoid of usage of synthetic chemicals, artificial fertilizers or genetically modified organisms. Organic farming is based on ecological balance, soil fertility and biodiversity conservation. These agricultural methods involve natural methods like crop rotation, composting and biological pest control.



The International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements defines organic agriculture as a production system that sustains the health of soils, ecosystems, and people by relying on ecological processes and biodiversity rather than harmful inputs. Organic farming also focuses on good management of natural resources and the sustainable practice of agriculture.

Organic foods comprise of large variety of products, fruits, and vegetables, grains, dairy products, meat, and processed foods under certified organic standards. Such standards control different processes regarding food production such as managing the soil, controlling pests, animal welfare, and the process of food processing.

The consumers tend to think that organic foods are better and safer than conventional foods since they do not contain harmful chemicals and synthetic additives. Also organic agricultural practices pollute the environment less and help in biodiversity maintenance, thus making organic foods appealing to environmentally sensitive consumers.

### **Organic Food Products Consumer Awareness**

The consumer awareness is very vital in influencing consumer behavior towards organic food products. The awareness can be defined as the degree at which the consumers are aware of the features, the benefits, and the availability of organic foods. Under the condition that consumers have high levels of understanding organic foods, they have chances to form positive attitudes and use organic products in their diets.

One of the key factors that increase the awareness of organic foods is the health consciousness. There is also increased concern by consumers about the health hazards that exist with chemical pesticides and food additives. Organic foods have a perception of being healthier since they are not manufactured using synthetic chemicals and artificial substances. Research conducted by Magnus Magnusson and colleagues found that consumers who are aware of the health benefits of organic foods are more likely to purchase them regularly (Magnusson et al., 2001). In order to understand consumers view about organic food, the study also found that they perceive organic foods as highly nutritious and safe.



The other significant issue affecting consumer awareness of organic foods is the environmental awareness. Conventional agricultural activities tend to bring environmental issues including soil erosion, water pollutions and reduced biodiversity. However, organic farming encourages sustainable farming which conserves the environment. Environmentally-conscious consumers will be more willing to embrace organic food production. According to John Thøgersen (2010), environmental concern is one of the major motivations behind consumers' preference for organic foods.

Nonetheless, there has been growing attention on organic foods yet consumers do not have sufficient knowledge on organic certification and labeling. The absence of information on the certification standards may cause misunderstanding and decrease the consumer confidence on organic products.

### **Consumer Behaviour with regards to Organic Food Products**

Consumer attitude is defined as the psychological disposition towards a product being favorable or unfavorable to the consumers. Some of the factors that contribute to attitudes towards organic foods include health benefits, environmental issues, product quality, and ethical issues. Positive attitudes towards organic products are more likely to be developed by consumers who think that organic foods are healthier and safer compared to conventional ones. According to Michael R. Solomon (2018), attitudes play a central role in shaping consumer decision-making and purchase behavior.

Consumer attitudes are also influenced by taste and the quality of the product. A significant number of consumers view organic foods to be fresh, tastier, and more natural as compared to conventional foods. The attitudes towards the consumption of organic food are positive because of these perceptions. Consumer attitudes are also based on ethical considerations like the environment sustainability and the welfare of animals. Environmentalists tend to buy organic foods since organic farming methods do not harm the environment and enhance sustainability in farming.



Nevertheless, a number of inhibiting barriers prevent the wide use of organic foods, although their attitudes towards them are positive. One of the most important challenges is price. Costs of production, certification and scarcity of supply make organic foods to cost more and more as compared to conventional foods.

Consequently, there is a likelihood that some of the consumers might even hold positive attitudes towards organic foods but they are not likely to buy them on a regular basis due to the price factor.

### **Purchase Intention on Organic Food Products**

Purchase intention is the actual probability of consumers to purchase a given product in future. As an aspect of organic foods, the purchase intention depends on the awareness and attitudes, perceived benefits and external factors like price and availability. Customers with high awareness and good attitude towards organic foods have the likelihood of expressing high purchase intentions. According to Thøgersen (2010), consumers who value environmental sustainability are more willing to purchase organic food products. Another factor that plays a significant role in purchase intention is the trust in organic certification. The consumers tend to purchase organic foods more frequently when they believe the validity of certification labels. The distrust that customers have in certification systems can minimize the willingness of consumers to spend extra money to purchase organic products. Purchase intentions are also largely influenced by marketing communication. Consumer awareness and promotion of consumption of organic foods can be boosted through advertising campaigns, advertisement promotions and labeling of products with information. Purchase behavior is also determined by availability of organic foods in retail stores. When organic products are highly available in supermarkets and the online shops, consumers tend to buy them.

### **Issues that Affect Consumer Behaviour on Organic Food**

The psychological, economic and social factors combine in influencing consumer behaviour towards organic food products. The current trends in consumption of organic food products among the consumers have greatly increased due to the unfading as well as the ever-increasing awareness regarding health, environmental sustainability and food safety. Nevertheless the choice on whether to



buy organic food depends on a number of interrelated factors that are sizeable in their effect like health awareness, environmental awareness, perceptions of quality of product, sensitivity to price and social influence. Marketers, policymakers and even organic food producers who need to foster sustainable consumption patterns need to understand these aspects.

### **Health Consciousness**

One of the greatest motivators of consumer behaviour with regard to the consumption of organic food products is health consciousness. Contemporary customers are gaining awareness regarding health hazards of chemically treated food items such as pesticides traces, artificial preservatives, and GMOs. Consequently, there is a large number of individuals that are interested in healthier options that will contribute to their overall well-being.

Organic food products have a broad idea of being healthy as they are grown without pesticides, fertilizers, antibiotics, or growth hormones that are synthetic. This image helps the consumers to think that organic foods are more nutritionally valuable and have less harmful components. Vegetarians and eco-friendly people, families with children, and older citizens are the target population because they are much more concerned about the quality of food they consume, believing that organic food is healthier and those who adopt it in the long term can be healthier.

The studies on consumer behaviour have continuously shown that those people who care more about nutrition and health are more inclined to consume organic foods. Improved immunity, digestion, and general well-being are the things that these consumers are likely to associate with organic foods. It, therefore, follows that health campaigns and nutritional awareness efforts are important in influencing consumers to shift to consumption of organic food.

Moreover, the trends in the modern lifestyle like the culture of fitness, wellness, and preventive medical care have enhanced the demand of organic products. The consumers with healthy eating habits including vegetarian, vegan, or clean-eating are especially likely to favor organic food products.



## Environmental Concerns

Another determinant of consumer behaviour towards organic food products in consumer behaviour is environmental awareness. During the latest years, the world has shown its concern with climate change, environmental degradation, and loss of biodiversity, which motivates consumers to patronize environmentally friendly practices. The concept of organic farming is generally acknowledged as an ecologically friendly and efficient way of farming since it focuses on natural phenomena and ecology.

The practices on organic farming do not result in the overuse of chemical fertilizers and pesticides that may all pollute soil, water, and air. In turn, organic farmers employ natural fertilizers, crop rotation, composting, and biological ways of pest control as means to preserve the fertility of the soil and to safeguard crops. The practices are useful in conserving soil health, minimizing pollution and biodiversity.

Environmentally conscious consumers tend to purchase organic products to make some contribution to environmental sustainability. By buying organic foods, they believe that they contribute to the farming method which is less damaging to the ecosystems. This environmental awareness makes a variety of consumers turn to organic products and incorporate them into their routines.

In addition, consumers who are environmentally conscious are more likely to consider organic products as a larger sustainable lifestyle that also incorporates the reduction of waste, conservation of resources, and ethical production. Consequently, the purchase decision in the organic food market is influenced heavily by the environmental values.

Educational campaigns, green activities, and coverage in the media on sustainable farming are also significant in influencing the consumer perception of organic food products. Consumers will tend to favor organic farming when they know the environmental importance of organic farming.



## Product Quality Perception

Another important issue that influences consumer behaviour of organic food products is the perception of quality of the products. Organic foods are perceived by a large number of consumers as being of high quality as opposed to the conventionally produced foods. The perception incorporates a number of factors like freshness, taste, nutritional value, and safety.

The organic foods are also linked to the natural production practices that do not embrace synthetic additives and the use of chemicals. It is due to this that consumers often tend to view organic foods as more natural and true to nature. The other quality that draws customers is freshness especially when the organic food is obtained in the local farms or the farmer markets.

Consumer preference is also determined by taste. The common perception amongst most consumers is that organic fruits, vegetables and dairy products have a richer and more natural flavour than the conventional ones. It is a belief that helps to make repeat purchases and create consumer loyalty to organic products.

Other factors such as taste and freshness, organic foods are perceived to be healthier by consumers. Though the debate on the scientific evidence of the nutritional superiority of organic foods still lingers, consumer perceptions have a major impact on decision making as regards purchasing. Customers become more ready to pay more money on organic products when they consider that organic products offer greater nutritional value.

Quality perception is also achieved through product labeling and certification. Formal organic certification labels are used to assure consumers that the products in the market are of a particular standard of organic farming and processing. These certifications make consumers trust and have confidence in organic products.



## **Marketing Strategy to promote Organic Food products**

In marketing the organic food products, the marketing strategies are important to raise the awareness of the consumers and promote their purchase. Successful marketing campaigns would be used to inform the consumers on the advantages of organic foods and overcome the wrong perceptions about the price and quality of organic foods. Advertising, social media marketing and product demonstration can be utilized by the retailers and producers to engage consumers more. Consumer trust is also possible through giving a clear information about organic certification and methods of production.

Distribution plans are also significant. This can be achieved through ensuring availability of organic foods at the supermarkets, specialty stores and online platforms to ensure that consumers have sufficient access to organic foods and will consume them. The governmental programs may also contribute to the development of the organic food market, advancing organic farming, setting the standards of certification, and holding the awareness campaigns among the people.

## **Business and Policy Maker Implications**

Knowledge of consumer awareness, attitudes as well as purchase intentions is important in the businesses dealing with the organic food sector. This information can be used to create specific marketing strategies, which the companies can use to attract health-conscious and environmentally conscious consumers. Companies need to devote the attention to the increase of the level of product visibility, the transparency of the information regarding organic certification, and the accentuation of the health and environmental benefits of organic products.

The policy makers can also contribute significantly in that they can put into place regulations that will produce authentic products and promote healthy agricultural practices. Organic farming can be promoted through government help in form of subsidies and certification programs, which will increase the market by increasing organic food.



## Conclusion

The growing trend of consuming organic food products is an indication of a growing trend in healthier and more sustainable consumption habits. The consumer awareness, attitudes and purchase intentions are important factors that affect the growth of the organic food market. The key factors that drive the consumption of organic foods include health conscious, environmental issues and understanding of product quality. Nonetheless, some problems like expensive cost, poor supply and knowledge of consumers on certification guidelines still plague the adoption of organic foods.

The business and policymakers should collaborate to advance awareness of organic food among consumers, enhance accessibility to the product, and enhance the enforcement of certification to boost the consumption of organic foods. The organic food market can address these challenges, which can further grow to promote healthier lifestyles and sustainability of the environment.

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