

**A COMPREHENSIVE STUDY ON THE FACTORS INFLUENCING CONSUMER
BEHAVIOR TOWARDS ORGANIC FOOD PRODUCTS IN CHENNAI**

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ABSTRACT

This study explores consumer behavior towards organic food products in Chennai, focusing on demographic patterns, attitudes, and barriers to adoption. The increasing trend of organic food consumption, driven by health consciousness and environmental concerns, is examined in relation to the challenges faced by consumers in terms of pricing, trust, and availability. Using a quantitative approach, data was collected through a structured questionnaire, analyzing factors such as health consciousness, environmental concern, price sensitivity, and trust in certification. Regression and factor analysis identified key determinants influencing organic food purchase behavior, with health consciousness and trust in certification emerging as the most significant factors. The study highlights the importance of addressing barriers such as high prices and limited availability to promote organic food adoption. Recommendations for policy and marketing strategies are provided to enhance consumer trust and accessibility. This research contributes to the understanding of organic food consumption in Chennai, offering insights for businesses, policymakers, and stakeholders.

Keywords: Consumer behavior, organic food, health consciousness, environmental concern, price sensitivity,

INTRODUCTION

It seems that there has been a big change in the way people around the world eat in the last several years. People are now eating better and more sustainably. One of the most important effects of this change is that more and more people are choosing organic foods, which are made without synthetic pesticides, fertilizers, genetically modified organisms (GMOs), or other

chemicals. People are putting more significance on health, nutrition, and the environment, and organic foods are thought to fit with these ideals. Chennai, which is one of India's biggest cities, is also a part of this trend. The city's educated, urban, and health-conscious people are slowly starting to make organic food a part of their lives. There are now different types of stores that sell organic food in Chennai, such as specialty organic stores, supermarkets with organic sections, and direct farm-to-home delivery models. Also, attempts to raise awareness and the power of social media have played a big role in getting people interested in organic products. Even though organic food is becoming more popular, the industry still has problems with prices, trust in the authenticity of products, availability, and customer knowledge.

The goal of this study is to look into how people in Chennai city behave when it comes to buying organic food. It looks at demographic trends, how people feel about buying things, what they like to buy, and what stops them from doing so. To promote the consumption of organic food more effectively and sustainably in urban India, entrepreneurs, policymakers, and stakeholders need to understand these factors. The research aims to address the deficiency in current literature by providing insights pertinent to the Chennai market.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

1. **Haiyan et.al (2023)** Consumers all around the world are always changing their eating patterns; organic food has drawn interest from them because of its health and safety features, which helps the organic sector to grow. Academics are particularly intrigued by the factors that affect customer decisions to purchase organic food. The findings of the present research, which are relatively broad and dispersed, are not systematically and comprehensively synthesized. This study aims to consolidate and assess the existing research on the factors affecting consumers' purchasing decisions regarding organic food, focusing on 51 papers sourced from the Web of Science database utilizing the PRISMA methodology. First, the basic information about the chosen papers was looked at, such as the year they were published, the theory, the method, and the region. Then, by comparing the literature, three groups of important factors that affect how consumers buy organic products were found: customer-related, product-specific, and external factors. The result helps academics understand how customers already buy organic goods and helps the

organic food company grow. Finally, gaps in the body of knowledge were examined, and a preliminary study plan for future generations of scholars was proposed.

2. **Sharma, R., & Ramesh, S. (2023)** the study most likely looks at how various demographic groups—young adults, older adults, high-income earners, low-income earners, those with more education—definite in their tastes and buying habits connected to organic food. The study might examine several facets of purchases of organic foods, including: Purchaser frequency Kinds of organic food bought (veggies, fruits, cereals, dairy, meat). Motives for selecting organic food (e.g., flavor, environmental issues, health advantages...) preferred outlets for organic food (such as grocery stores, farmers' markets, internet merchants). The writers most certainly investigate the statistical links between demographic traits and many facets of organic food purchase. The study is to give insightful analysis for companies engaged in the organic food sector, therefore enabling them to better grasp the local consumer scene and modify their plans. The study can suggest new research avenues, such as examining the impact of certain marketing strategies on organic food consumption or the role of social media in shaping consumer preferences. In general, and specifically in reference to Chennai, the study adds to what we know about the Indian organic food sector. It stresses how important it is to know who your customers are and how they make food choices.
3. **Hasiful Fata Talhah et.al (2023)** the study demand for organic foods is typically anticipated among health-conscious consumers. However, it is crucial to understand other factors, especially within the Malaysian context. The objective of this study was to ascertain the correlation between particular factors and customer sentiments toward organic food in Selangor. This study examined the relationship between three variables—health consciousness, food safety concern, and environmental concern—and consumers' perceptions of organic food. We got 473 valid surveys from people who buy food in Selangor, and we used SPSS version 21 to evaluate the data statistically based on the research topics. The findings indicated significant correlations among the variables. There is a link between how consumers feel about organic foods and their worries about health, food safety, and the environment. The study shows that today's food buyers are

increasingly concerned about their health and the safety of the food they eat, as well as environmental issues. Food marketers need to keep in mind that the three independent variables affect how people think about organic food. The results open up more chances for food marketers and the food service and hotel industries to create and promote menus with more organic foods.

4. **Kumar, S., & Arulraj, K. (2022)** Their study aims to evaluate a model of consumer behavior regarding organic products, particularly processed items; the target population consists of two non-random samples. Two different questionnaires were used to study the two groups, even though they had certain questions in common. The objective of conducting two parallel studies is to ascertain the specific areas in which the respondents' perspectives diverge, so facilitating the development of an alternative marketing approach to engage them in the market. The authors of the study look into how Bulgarian customers of organic products act when they buy organic foods. They do this by looking at how price-sensitive they are and how the items differ from one other, such as by brand or region. See if there is a link between gender, number of family members, how often they go shopping, and the kind of food they buy the most.
5. **Mehta & Iyer (2020)** underscore the significance of trust and certification in the Indian organic sector. The authors assert that establishing customer confidence necessitates dependable certification procedures and robust belief in the veracity of organic assertions. They also address the necessity for clear labeling regulations and robust accrediting procedures to guarantee the authenticity of organic products in both domestic and foreign markets.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Even though there is a lot of support for organic food items around the world and in India, the organic food sector in Chennai city has a lot of problems that make it hard for people to use them. One big problem is that not many people know what organic food is or how it might help their health. Many people, including those who live in cities like Chennai, don't know what the standards and methods are for organic products. This makes people doubt and not trust the organic labels that are on the market. Another big problem is that people are sensitive to price. Organic food is generally more expensive than regular food, which makes it hard for many

people to get. People are unsure if the health and environmental benefits are worth the higher prices. Also, the fact that supply chains are not always reliable and that retail stores have limited shelf space makes it even harder to find and choose products. These logistical problems make it hard for people to buy what they want. Also, things like education level, money, family health issues, and cultural preferences can affect how people feel about buying things and what they decide to buy. Some people care about the environment and want to eat food that doesn't have chemicals in it, but others don't care because they haven't been exposed to it or because they have always done it that way. In Chennai, these differences mean that we need to have a more detailed understanding of what makes people want to eat organic food and what stops them from doing so.

This study aims to ascertain the fundamental elements that shape consumer preferences and behaviors regarding organic food products in Chennai. It also seeks to emphasize the perceived advantages and disadvantages of organic food from the consumer's viewpoint. In the end, the study aims to give strategic advice on how to promote the use of organic food in a way that is both long-lasting and open to everyone.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. To examine the primary factors affecting consumer behavior regarding the acquisition of organic food goods in Chennai.
2. To look into the problems that people in Chennai have when they try to get and use organic food.
3. To look into how demographic factors affect how people buy organic food.
4. To suggest ways to get more people in Chennai to eat organic food.

METHODOLOGY

This study utilized a quantitative research methodology to analyze consumer behavior regarding organic food goods in Chennai. A structured questionnaire served as the principal instrument for data collection, encompassing both demographic and psychographic factors. The questionnaire was given to 100 people in Chennai city who were from different age groups, economic levels, and educational backgrounds. We used convenience sampling because we

didn't have the time or resources to do anything else. The survey included Likert-scale questions to find out how health-conscious, concerned about the environment, price-sensitive, trusting of certification, and available people were. The data that were gathered were looked at with SPSS software. We used regression analysis to find out how independent variables affected buying behavior. We also did factor analysis to put factors into groups that made sense. Cronbach's Alpha was used to check how reliable the scale was. The research guaranteed the anonymity and confidentiality of participants. All responses were gathered ethically, and participants were apprised of the research's objectives. The methodology sought to ascertain the principal elements affecting customer behavior and deliver data-driven insights. We used both descriptive and inferential statistics to correctly understand the results. The results were then checked with model fit measurements and ANOVA testing.

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Table 1: Regression Analysis – Factors Influencing Purchase of Organic Food Products in Chennai

Independent Variables	Unstandardized Coefficient (B)	Standard Error	Standardized Coefficient (Beta)	t-value	Sig. (p-value)
Health Consciousness	0.412	0.082	0.387	5.024	0.000
Environmental Concern	0.295	0.076	0.312	3.882	0.001
Price Sensitivity	-0.154	0.068	-0.169	-2.265	0.026
Trust in Certification	0.338	0.091	0.276	3.714	0.000
Availability	0.174	0.065	0.165	2.677	0.009
Constant	1.321	0.493	–	2.680	0.009

The regression results show that health consciousness has a strong and significant positive effect on buying behavior. The unstandardized coefficient (B) is 0.412 and the standardized Beta is

0.387, which means that people who are more health-conscious are much more likely to buy organic food ($p = 0.000$). Likewise, environmental concern positively affects purchasing decisions ($B = 0.295$, $Beta = 0.312$, $p = 0.001$), indicating that environmentally conscious consumers are more inclined to select organic items. On the other hand, price sensitivity has a negative correlation ($B = -0.154$, $Beta = -0.169$, $p = 0.026$), which means that as people get more aware of prices, they are less likely to buy organic food. Trust in certification is also quite important ($B = 0.338$, $Beta = 0.276$, $p = 0.000$). This shows that believing that organic labels are real makes people more likely to buy. Lastly, availability has a positive effect ($B = 0.174$, $Beta = 0.165$, $p = 0.009$), which means that having more organic food options makes it more likely that people will buy them. All variables are statistically significant ($p < 0.05$), underscoring the collective influence of health, values, price, trust, and accessibility on customer behavior.

Table 2: Model Summary

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
0.742	0.551	0.537	0.634

The model does a decent job of fitting the data because it explains 55.1% of the difference in buying behavior ($R^2 = 0.551$). The adjusted R^2 stays at 53.7% even after taking into account the predictors. This shows that the model is still strong. The R-value of 0.742 shows a strong link between the predictors and the result. This means that the model captures a big part of the relationship between the variables. The standard error of 0.634 indicates modest predictive accuracy, emphasizing that although the model offers useful insights, there is potential for enhancement in precision. In general, the model is statistically sound and a good tool for looking at how people make judgments about what to buy.

Table 3: ANOVA

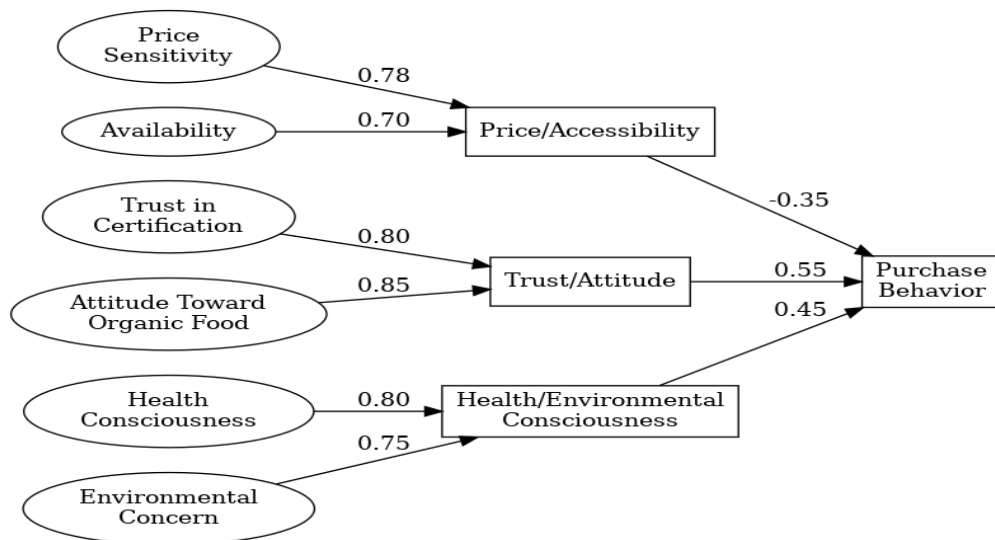
Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	48.326	5	9.665	24.006	0.000
Residual	39.234	94	0.417		

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Total	87.560	99			

The ANOVA test confirms the regression model is statistically significant ($F = 24.006$, $p = 0.000$). This indicates that the combination of variables explains variation in consumer behavior. The high F-value shows the model's predictors have a meaningful effect. A low significance value (< 0.001) means the model is not due to chance. Overall, the regression is valid and supports further interpretation.

Table 4: Factor loading table

Variable	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
Health Consciousness	0.80	0.10	0.05
Environmental Concern	0.75	0.15	0.10
Price Sensitivity	0.05	0.78	0.12
Availability	0.10	0.70	0.05
Trust in Certification	0.05	0.10	0.80
Attitude Toward Organic Food	0.05	0.05	0.85



The path diagram illustrates a comprehensive structural model of organic food purchase behavior, where three distinct factors emerge as key determinants. Health/Environmental Consciousness demonstrates a moderate positive influence (0.45) on purchase behavior, with strong individual loadings from health consciousness (0.80) and environmental concern (0.75). Price/Accessibility shows a negative impact (-0.35), reflecting how cost barriers and availability issues can deter purchases, supported by robust loadings from price sensitivity (0.78) and availability (0.70). The Trust/Attitude factor emerges as the most influential determinant (0.55) of purchase behavior, incorporating both trust in certification (0.80) and overall attitude toward organic food (0.85), suggesting that consumer confidence and positive disposition are crucial drivers of organic food purchases.

DISCUSSIONS

The study on consumer behavior toward organic food products in Chennai sheds light on key motivational and deterrent factors shaping urban purchase patterns. Health consciousness stands out as a primary driver, consistent with the findings of Chen (2007), who highlighted the link between health awareness and organic food preference. Environmental concern also significantly influences consumer choices, as eco-aware individuals align their consumption with sustainability goals (Yadav & Pathak, 2016). Despite these positive motivations, barriers such as price sensitivity continue to hinder wider adoption. Vermeir and Verbeke (2006) similarly noted that even consumers with favorable attitudes often hesitate due to high costs and lack of trust. The study found that trust in certification plays a crucial role in enhancing consumer confidence—a view supported by Hughner et al. (2007), who emphasized the need for clear labeling and transparency. Limited availability of organic food further constrains consumers, echoing Aertsens et al. (2009), who identified accessibility as a key issue. Regression analysis in the current study confirms the statistical significance of all five variables: health, environment, price, trust, and availability, with trust and health having the highest positive influence. Factor analysis revealed three principal components—Health/Environmental Consciousness, Price/Accessibility, and Trust/Attitude—with trust and attitude emerging as the strongest predictors of purchase behavior. This supports the findings of previous researchers who advocated for more consumer education and reliable certification systems. Demographically, younger, educated, and higher-income individuals in Chennai are more likely to adopt organic

consumption (Yadav & Pathak, 2016). However, a clear attitude-behavior gap exists, as noted by Vermeir and Verbeke (2006), where positive perceptions do not always translate into purchase. Awareness campaigns, social media influence, and farm-to-home models are gaining traction but require strategic amplification. The study advocates for integrated efforts by policymakers, marketers, and retailers to address pricing, authenticity, and accessibility. Recommendations include improving distribution channels, enhancing public trust in certifications, and making organic food affordable through subsidies or bundled offerings. Overall, the findings affirm the potential for organic food growth in Chennai but emphasize that trust-building and accessibility are crucial for sustainable adoption.

FINDINGS

1. With a noteworthy favorable impact on purchase behavior ($B = 0.412$, $p = 0.000$), this turned up as the biggest incentive. Seeking chemical-free and nutritious alternatives, consumers who give health and nutrition top priority are more inclined to choose organic food.
2. Higher environmental awareness consumers are more likely to buy organic items ($B = 0.295$, $p = 0.001$), so showing a developing feeling of sustainability among urbanites.
3. Purchases behavior is much improved by trust in the legitimacy of organic labeling ($B = 0.338$, $p = 0.000$). Customers are more likely to purchase knowing about product certification.
4. Particularly among price-conscious buyers, a negative connection was detected ($B = -0.154$, $p = 0.026$), meaning that higher prices discourage purchases.
5. Accessibility problems limit sales ($B = 0.174$, $p = 0.009$), since organic food is not readily available in retail stores thereby restricting consumer choice and convenience.
6. Moderate positive influence, 0.45; high loadings from health consciousness (0.80) and environmental concern (0.75).
7. Strong loadings from price sensitivity (0.78) and availability (0.70) have a negative impact, -0.35.
8. Strongest influence is trust/attitude (0.55); loadings from attitude toward organic food (0.85) and trust in certification (0.80).

9. With a strong adjusted R^2 of 53.7%, the regression model shows 55.1% of the variance in purchasing behavior ($R^2 = 0.551$). Validity of the model is confirmed by the ANOVA test ($F = 24.006, p = 0.000$).
10. Adoption suffers from limited consumer knowledge of organic certification criteria and mistrust of product authenticity.

SUGGESTIONS

1. Use social media, seminars, and community activities to raise awareness about the health, environmental, and dietary benefits of organic food.
2. On packaging, include QR codes or digital verification tools so that customers may confirm the veracity of organic goods.
3. Establish government incentives or subsidies to lower the cost of organic food, therefore enabling a wider population to purchase it.
4. Make organic food more available in supermarkets, local markets, and online stores to open up more ways to get it.
5. Promote public-private alliances to help retail projects and organic farming, therefore guaranteeing a consistent availability of organic goods.

CONCLUSION

The research finds that health awareness, concern for the environment, price sensitivity, trust in certification, and product availability all play a role in how people in Chennai buy organic food. Among these, being aware of health was the biggest driver, as people looked for healthy and chemical-free options. People's concerns about the environment also had a big impact on their purchase decisions, showing that people in cities are becoming more aware of sustainability. But the price is still a big problem, which makes organic food less available to most people. Trust in certification was discovered to be quite important—people are more likely to buy when they are sure that the goods is real. Availability also has an effect on how easy it is to buy and how willing you are to do so. The factor and regression analyses corroborated that trust and attitude towards organic food exert the most significant impact on purchasing behavior.

People who are younger, more educated, and have more money tend to favor organic products more, but many people still hesitate because they don't know much about them or because they are too expensive. The gap between intention and action highlights the need for targeted awareness campaigns and transparent marketing practices. Government and private sector initiatives are essential to address barriers and promote trust. Improved supply chains, price control measures, and expanded retail presence can help increase accessibility. Additionally, certification bodies must strengthen credibility to overcome consumer skepticism. With Chennai's health-conscious and environmentally aware population, the organic food market holds promising potential. Bridging the existing gaps through strategic efforts will ensure inclusive and sustainable growth. The study recommends a multi-pronged approach involving education, accessibility, affordability, and trust-building to boost organic food adoption in urban India.

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