



## CONSUMER AWARENESS ABOUT ORGANIC FOOD PRODUCTS IN COIMBATORE DISTRICT- AN EMPIRICAL STUDY

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### Abstract

In recent decades, organic food sector is the fastest growing sector all around the world. With growing awareness towards healthy foods, surging income levels and shift in consumer behavior, India's emerging organic food market is recently transforming into the world's fastest growing food market. Organic food includes food products obtained from a farming system which avoids using synthetic fertilizers, pesticides, hormones, genetically modified organisms and irradiation. A variety of factors have contributed to the increasing popularity. This paper aim is through a light on importance of organic food products for healthy life. The main aim of the paper is to Know about the awareness about Organic Food Products. The opinion of consumer about organic food products was that 85.83 per cent of respondents found that organic food products are good for the environment. The changing trend in the perception of the consumers of organic food products is understood by the increasing number of organic food buyers. A scientific study would bring out the changing perceptions of organic food consumers.

**Keywords:** Organic Food, Consumer Behaviour.

### Introduction of the Study

Organic food products, by their perceived characteristics, attract the consumers to organic food consumption from conventional food consumption. Consumers have various perceptions and attitudes towards these organic food product Organic food products have become popular in the last few years throughout the world. According to Wier and Calverley (2002), consumers' interest in organic food products has grown tremendously in many industrialized countries during the past ten years. It is observed that the organic food products are also one of the fastest growing areas of the food market in India.

### Benefits of Organic Food

#### 1. Stringent Standards

The "Organic" certification you see on a product means that it has been grown, processed and handled according to strict guidelines and procedures – at the highest level it means it contains no toxic chemicals. The federal government set standards for the production, processing and certification of organic food in the Organic Food Production Act of 1990 (OFPA).

#### 2. Better for the Soil

Organic farming returns nourishment to the soil, which in turn creates better conditions for crops to thrive during droughts. Healthy soil acts much like a sponge and filter, so it helps to clean the water passing through it. Organically treated soil also traps carbon – and less of it in our atmosphere means fewer effects from climate change.

#### 3. Innovative Research

Mostly at their own expense, organic produce growers have paved the way with innovative research that has created ways to reduce our dependence on pesticides and chemical fertilizers – both often by products of fossil fuels. They also have led the way in developing more energy efficient ways of farming.

#### 4. Increases Consumer Choices

Thanks to organic farmers, nearly every food category offers an organic alternative. That has even extended into textiles. You can now sleep on sheets and wear clothes made of organic cotton.

#### 5. Protects Family Farms and Rural Communities

As U.S. farm production continues to consolidate, small family farms are in danger of disappearing. With its higher profit margins, organic farming may be one way for family-owned farms to thrive – and in turn, revive dying rural communities.

#### 6. Part of Your Community

Because organic food contains no preservatives and must be consumed quickly, it often is sold to grocery stores nearby. Chances are, if you eat an organic vegetable or fruit, you wouldn't have to travel far to visit where it was grown.

#### 7. Safer and More Humane Animal Products.

Organically raised animals are not fed animal by products, or given antibiotics and growth hormones. And to increase their health, they're given more room to move as well as access to a natural outside environment. Crowded living conditions are a leading cause of animal sickness and suffering.

### Organic Food Production in India

Organic farming system in India is not new and is being followed from ancient time. It is a method of farming system which primarily aimed at cultivating the land and raising crops in such a way, as to keep the soil alive and in good health by use of organic wastes (crop, animal and farm wastes, aquatic wastes) and other biological materials along with beneficial microbes



(biofertilizers) to release nutrients to crops for increased sustainable production in an eco friendly pollution free environment. Major Organic foods produced in India are presented in Table:1.1

**Major Organic Foods Produced in India**

S. No	Type of Commodity	Products
1	Cereals	Rice, Wheat
2	Spices	Cardamom, Black pepper, White Pepper, Ginger, Turmeric, Vanilla, Tamarind, Clove, Cinnamon, Nutmeg, Mace, Chilly.
3	Pulses	Red gram, Black gram ,Oil Seeds Mustard, Sesame, Castor, Sunflower
4	Fruits	Mango, Banana, Pineapple, Passion Fruit, Sugar Cane, Orange, Cashewnut, Walnut
5	Vegetables	Brinjal, Garlic, Onion, Tomato, Potato

### Statement of Problem

Food products from conventional farming have more hold in the market due to their mass availability and cheaper prices. Due to the strong competition between organic products and conventional food products in the retail system, it is relevant to investigate perceptions of organic consumers, their attitudes and buying behaviour towards organic products. Area under organic farming is on an increase and the number of dealers in Organic food product is also increasing. All these factors urge for a study to know the level of awareness of organic food consumers , their buying behaviours, factors influencing their buying decisions towards organic products, influence of the attributes of organic products etc..

### Objectives of the Study

1. To assess the level of awareness of consumers of organic Food products in Coimbatore city
2. To make suitable suggestions for the marketers of organic food products for a potential segmentation of consumers base.

### Limitation of the Study

As the data collected is confined to a particular area, the findings of the study have to be generalized to other situations with caution. As marketing of organic food products is a developing area of research, only limited literature were available. The study is based on variables related with farm food products, it may not be possible to have a complete precision in such studies.

### Review of Literature

**Gracia and Magistris (2013)** investigated the factors that influence organic food purchases of urban consumers in the South of Italy. Results of the study indicated that consumers who are more willing to buy organic food products are more likely to buy a larger amount of those products. The intention to purchase depends on attitudes and organic product knowledge. Moreover, consumers' attitudes towards health and environmental benefits provided by organic foods are the most important factors explaining, both, the intention to purchase and the final decision. Thus, income is still a factor limiting organic food product consumption in southern Italy. The most important factors explaining organic food product purchases are consumers' attitudes towards health and environmental benefits provided by organic foods. Both attitudes positively influence the intention to purchase and the final decision.

**Kavaliauske and Ubartaite (2014)** took up a study to determine the factors that influence the intention to buy organic products. It identified the influence of consumer ethical beliefs, concern about product safety, concern about health, and two moderating variables: product price and product availability, on the intention to buy organic products. Concern about health also had positive influence on intention to buy, and positively correlated with concern about product composition. These findings revealed that for intention to buy ethical products not only ethical beliefs are important but also the great consumer concern about its health. Further, it was determined that consumers perceive organic products both as healthier, and friendlier for the environment. The price was perceived as important factor for buying organic products, but it was perceived as affordable, and price had positive impact on intention to buy organic products. Consumers in Lithuania perceive organic products more like luxury goods.

**Rushdi Ahmed and Khadiza Rahman (2015)** attempted to identify and explain the factors that influence consumer buying behaviour of organic foods in Bangladeshi Supermarkets. Majority of the participants of the survey questionnaire expressed



that organic food is healthier than industrially manufactured food, they are high in nutrition, and perceived the organic production methods with a positive approach. The major problems identified through the research are lack of awareness and sufficient knowledge about organic food, lack of availability and limited range of products, high price and high regard for certification labeling. The influences of these factors were significant to alter consumer buying behaviour and purchase decisions.

**Jayanthi (2015)** study aimed to investigate the promotional strategy that can be initiated to increase the awareness and market potential of Organic food products among consumers. The overall image of Organic food sector seems to be positive but the intention to purchase Organic food products is not upto the mark in India because of the limited knowledge and awareness among consumers due to ineffective promotion. A stratified random sampling method has been used and a total of 550 respondents were surveyed by using a questionnaire in this study. The results showed that majority 49.1% of the respondents stated that Television advertisement can be used to promote Organic food products and 40% of the respondents opined to use in-store advertising in the retail outlets to promote Organic food products.

**Methodology**

Sampling and Method of Analysis Among the different cities in Tamil Nadu, the Coimbatore city has been purposively selected for the present study. The consumers have been selected by adopting random sampling technique through pre-tested and structured questionnaire. A sample of 400 consumers in Coimbatore was selected among organic food product consumers.

**Analysis of Data & Discussion**

**Sources of Information for Organic Food Products**

Concept of organic food product is a newly emerging one and its reach is still in remote stage across the various sections of the common consumers. Consumers depend on various sources of information on organic food products. The study included Television , Radio , Internet , Newspaper, Magazine and Books , Friends and Colleagues , Seminar and Conference , Health worker like Doctor, Nurse or Nutritionist and Others as the sources of information on organic foods. Response for level of dependence on these sources has been captured in a five point Likert’s scale as Very Low, Low, Moderate, High and Very High. These responses have been converted into numerical scores of 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 respectively. To understand and compare the effect of these sources as perceived by the respondents, the average scores have been computed. Television has emerged as the top ranking source with a mean score of 4.64 out of 5, followed by Newspaper, Magazine and Books with an average score of 3.92. Descriptive Statistics for Sources of information for Organic Food Products **are presented in Table: 1.2**

**Table 1.2: Descriptive Statistics for Sources of information for Organic Food Products**

Sources of information	Mean	Std. Deviation
Television	4.64	.605
Newspaper, Magazine and Books	3.92	.585
Internet	3.92	.497
Radio	3.19	.607
Friends and Colleagues	3.01	.445
Health worker like Doctor, Nurse or Nutritionist	2.30	.947
Others	2.25	.655
Seminar and Conference	2.23	.755

Source: Survey Results computed by the Researcher

**Chi Square Analysis for Testing the Significance of Relationship of Level of Awareness with the Socio Economic Variables**

Chi square test has been applied for testing the significance of relationship of the level of awareness on the organic food products with the socio economic variables related to the respondents. Null Hypotheses  $H_0$  : There is no significant relationship between the level of awareness of the respondents and the related socio economic variable, viz., Domicile, Age, Gender, Educational Status, Occupational Status, Family Type, Family Size, Number of Earning Members and Annual Family Income, was tested at 5% level of significance against the alternate hypotheses  $H_1$ : There is a significant relationship between the level of awareness of the respondents and the related socio economic variables. Chi Square test was carried out and the result indicates that Gender alone has got a significant relationship with the level of awareness. Consolidated results of Chi Square Test for Relationship between Level of Awareness on Organic Food Products and Vs Socio Economic Factors are presented in Table:1.3



**Table 1.3: Consolidated Results of Chi Square Test for Relationship between Level of Awareness on Organic Food Products and Vs Socio Economic Factors**

S. No	Relationship between Level of Awareness and	Pearson Chi-Square	df	p value	Inference at 5% level of Significance
1	Domicile	6.588	4	.159	Relationship is not Significant
2	Age	30.654	20	.060	Relationship is not Significant
3	Gender	11.130	4	.025	Relationship is Significant
4	Educational Status	10.954	12	.533	Relationship is not Significant
5	Occupational Status	15.601	20	.741	Relationship is not Significant
6	Family Type	3.385	4	.496	Relationship is not Significant
7	Family Size	18.325	12	.106	Relationship is not Significant
8	Number of Earning Members	8.077	8	.426	Relationship is not Significant
9	Annual Family Income	16.938	12	.152	Relationship is not Significant
10	Level of Purchase Intention	9.935	12	.622	Relationship is not Significant

**Present and Future Consumption of Organic Food Products**

Analysis indicated that, at present, vegetables and fruits are consumed by all the respondents, cereals by 41.3%, and pulses by 36.3% of the respondents. However, expected future consumption indicates that vegetables and fruits would be continued to be consumed by all the respondents, pulses by 76%, Meat and meat products by 70.5%, Cereals (Wheat, Rice, etc.) by 65% of the respondents. Future consumption has indicated a high increase in all the organic food products and predominantly in Meat and meat products, Bread and bakery products and Milk and milk products. Producers and dealers of these products may devise suitable marketing strategies to meet the increasing demand in future. Present and Future expected Consumption of Organic Food Products as stated by the Respondents is presented in Table: 1.4

**Table 1.4: Present and Future expected Consumption of Organic Food Products as stated by the Respondents**

Organic Food Product	At Present		In Future		Increase In Percentages
	Number of respondents consuming	Percentage	Number of respondents Expected	Percentage	
Vegetables	400	100.0	400	100.0	0
Fruits	400	100.0	400	100.0	0
Meat and meat products	75	18.8	282	70.5	51.7
Milk and milk products	93	23.3	235	58.8	35.5
Cereals (Wheat, Rice, etc.)	165	41.3	260	65.0	23.7
Bread and bakery products	16	4.0	213	53.3	49.3
Pulses	145	36.3	306	76.5	40.2
Baby products	12	3.0	126	31.5	28.5
Dried fruits and nuts	64	16.0	209	52.3	36.3
Beverages	57	14.3	229	57.3	43
Oil	93	23.3	192	48.0	24.7
Sugar products (Honey, Jam, etc.)	138	34.5	207	51.8	17.3
Herbs and Spices	130	32.5	205	51.3	18.8

Source: Survey Results computed by the Researcher

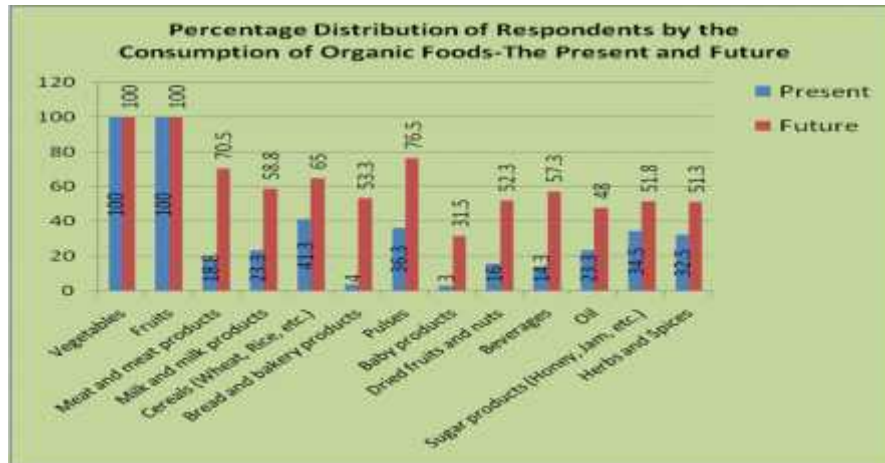


Figure 1.1: Percentage Distribution of Respondents by the Consumption of Organic Foods-The Present and Future  
Source: Survey Results computed by the Researcher

### Findings

- Television is the top source of information to the respondents followed by Newspaper, Magazine and Books.
- Overall level of awareness of respondents is 87%. Also 87.3% of respondents have either high or very high level of awareness on organic food products
- Among the various socio economic variables, Gender alone has got a significant relationship with the level of awareness on organic food products
- At present, vegetables and fruits were consumed by all the respondents, cereals by 41.3%, and pulses by 36.3% of the respondents. Expected future consumption indicates that vegetables and fruits would be continued to be consumed by all the respondents, pulses by 76%, Meat and meat products by 70.5%, Cereals (Wheat, Rice, etc.) by 65% of the respondents. Future consumption has indicated a high increase in all the organic food products and predominantly in Meat and meat products, Bread and bakery products and Milk and milk products.

### Suggestions

1. To increase the demand of organic food products in the market, more advertisements in the television media is required on organic food products.
2. Price of organic food products Efforts needed to bring down the cost of organic products so that its price may be able to come within the reach of common man and comparable with conventional food products.
3. Delivery can prove an effective tool in high-end segment of the market.

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