

A Study on Consumer Buying Behaviour of Organic Products

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Abstract

At present there is a paradigm shift among the consumers from commercial products to organic products. This transition is more evident post COVID 19 pandemic because of the rising risk factors related to health and immunity. The pandemic caused by COVID-19 has triggered the consumers to switch to organic products especially food products. Apparently there is a tremendous change in the global organic market as well. Organic products include, food products, textile products, personal care products, household materials, furnishings etc. Even though organic products are expensive than non-organic products, consumers widely choose organic products because it would be organic certified, free from chemicals and harsh toxins, eco-friendly, preserve our eco system, sustainable development of community and also build stronger future generations.

This study was done in Bangalore Urban among 210 consumers, which included students, home makers, professionals and elderly people through random sampling method. Their age group ranged from 20 to 75 years. Structured questionnaire was framed and the study was conducted online. The objective of the study was to (a) study the buying behaviour of consumers on organic products pre and post pandemic lockdown times and (b) gain knowledge about factors influencing the consumers' buying behaviour towards organic products and the problems associated with it. Buying behaviour of the organic products including food products, textile products, personal care products, household materials and décor was studied. The data collected was analysed and the results revealed that 92% of the consumers had a positive attitude towards organic products, the main reason being health consciousness. The problems they faced in buying organic products were mainly irregular availability, high cost and limited availability.

Keywords: Organic Products, Consumer Attitude, Consumer Behaviour, Marketing Strategies.

1. Introduction

The Definition of the word "Organic", an ecological management production system that promotes and enhances biodiversity, biological cycles and soil biological activity. It is based on the minimal use of off-farm inputs and on management practices that restore, maintain and enhance "ecological harmony" (National Standards Board of the US Department of Agriculture (USDA)).

According to Engel, Blackwell, and Mansard (1976)-"Consumer Behaviour is the actions and the decision processes of people who purchase goods and services for personal consumption". Consumer buying behaviour is the psychologically-based process in which decisions are made by the consumers while purchasing products based on several factors, influences and actions. A study on Awareness Attitude And Perception Analysis As Strategies of Consumer Buying Behaviour towards Organic Food

Products Among The College Students In Coimbatore District” found that 96% of the people were aware about the organic food while 51.6% public buy food from organic product store. (Sundaresh K, 2018).

Background of the Study

The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic was undoubtedly a unique period which affected the everyday life of people around the world. It is believed that the pandemic was a serious concern in terms of public health, economic and financial security, quality of life and food security across the globe. The global health crisis has specifically influenced the eating habits or contributed to the change of lifestyle of a great number of people. (WHO, 2021).

COVID-19 accelerated a concern for sustainability and health concern. In this regard, the consumption of organic food and use of organic products increased. (Cachero-Martínez, 2020). Organic products are eco-friendly products made with natural materials, which implies to be non-synthetic, preservative free and chemical free. The biggest challenge in developing healthier communities begins with the concern for the environment because the consumer choice regarding the environment has influenced the quality of life for both future and current generations.

Currently, the urge to create a healthy as well as a sustainable environment has initiated the interest in generating awareness among the consumers to be sensible about their choice on organic products. However, the demand for organic products has increased considerably in the last decade. In a study done by Chandrashekar (2014) on Consumers Perception towards Organic Products in Mysore, it was seen that low price of organic food was a major reason for low demand in the city of Mysore. According to them, the ratio of non-organic buyers was comparatively higher due to lack of awareness about organic produce.

The transition of the consumers from commercial products to organic products protects themselves, their family members, environments and community at large. The perseverance of the consumers to organic products are largely due to factors like good quality, chemical free, synthetic additive free etc. With this change in the consumer attitude, the supply of organic products in the market also have increased. Numerous technological advances are promoting innovation that many describe as “the fourth industrial revolution”.

In a study on Factors Affecting Consumer Preference towards the Organic Food Purchases it was noted that females having more inclination towards organic products than males. The study identified education, income and awareness as key determinants for the demand of organic food. Sivathanu (2015) Past studies reveal that there exist only a few numbers of literature emphasizing on how the change in price and availability of organic products in stores have an adverse effect over consumers’ purchase intentions. Therefore it is crucial to investigate the factors which motivate as well as hinders consumers’ organic food consumption. Change is evident in the behaviour of individuals who are seeking alternatives to the consumption of conventional products.

Significance of the study

This study contributes to the buying behaviour of the consumers on organic products mainly food, greens & vegetables, apparels, housing accessories & décor, furnishings and cosmetics. The significance of the study is that it intends to know about the purchasing behaviour of consumers, their frequency of purchase, mode of purchase and also the reasons in particular for opting organic

products. The aim of the study is majorly to understand the preference level of consumers towards organic products.

Objectives of the Study

- To understand the purchasing behavior of consumer towards organic products
- To know the number of factors contribute to the buying of organic products.
- To analyze the significant factors related to the buying behavior of consumers.

2. Materials and Methods

The study was done during January 2022 to March 2022. The study is based on primary data. The primary data was collected from selected consumers through Simple Random sampling techniques. The sample consisted of 198 consumers of age group between 20 to 65 years in Bangalore Urban. Both male and female were considered for the data.

Structured questionnaires were administered to the consumers. The questionnaire included 25 research questions to identify the socio demographic and economic characteristics of the respondents, purchasing behaviour, mode of buying, frequency of buying, reasons for opting organic products, recommendations for marketing organic products and problems associated with the organic products available in the market. Questions were framed to meet the objectives of the study and also keeping in mind the psychological approach of the consumers towards the products in the market and the marketing strategies.

Statistical analysis included percentages of the responses which are interpreted with related studies. .

3. Results and Discussion

This study intends to know about the purchasing behaviour of consumers, their frequency of purchase, mode of purchase and also the reasons in particular for opting organic products. The aim of the study is majorly to understand the preference level of consumers towards organic products.

The sample consisted of 135 females and 63 males. The age and gender wise distribution showed that among the 198 respondents, 68% of the females and 33% of the males fell under the age group of 20 to 30 years. The remaining of them were spread between below 20 years to above 50 years of age.

Table 1 depicts the socio demographic and economic profile of the respondents. It included their familial details (type of family and Marital Status), educational status, occupational status, income range and also expenditure pattern.

According to the table, among the 198 respondents, 89.9% belonged to nuclear family, 64.6% of them were married, and more than 45% of them had an average income of Rs. 6,00,000 per annum. 59.6% of the respondents were working professionals irrespective of the gender and 43.4% were professionally qualified. With regard to their expenditure pattern, 45.7% for food, 34.3% for housing and related services, and 7.1% for cosmetics and toiletries.

The Economic Times picture that Indians spend less on food and more on housing related services and also health & education. Housing expenses went down from 15.2% in 2001 to 16.87% now while expenses on miscellaneous items including health and education is also up from 23% to 30%, as per the revised index launched by the Labour Bureau. (Yogima Seth Sharma, 2020).

Buying behaviour of the respondents

In this study emphasis was on the preference level of organic products among the consumers. The organic products chosen were categorised as food & drinks, Clothing, Home Décor, and Cosmetics. The preference level in table 2 reveals that 43 % females and 69.8% males preferred organic foods, 31.9% females and 11.1% males chose organic cosmetic products. Almost 20% of them preferred eco-friendly clothing and apparel irrespective of gender.

Consumers who purchase organic products are referred to as 'green consumers'. It is a heterogeneous group when it comes to the motives of the customers for purchasing organic products. The consumers can be divided as follows:

- Consumers who demonstrate common sense, whose environmental behavior is based on reliable information and is driven by a desire to gain prestige;
- Self-oriented consumers whose motivates to purchase organic products are related to taking care of their own health and the well-being of their families
- Organic fanatics who consider only organic products to be valuable. (Klimczyk-Bryl, 2015).

The results of the study showed in table 3 exposes the factors considered by the consumers while buying organic products. Product quality with assurance certification like eco mark, AGMARK, veg mark etc. were much considered by 90% of the respondents. 97% of the consumers irrespective of gender preferred self-made organic products to those available in commercial stores and market. This shows the scope and potential of entrepreneurship in the area of organic products.

Though in India the organic cosmetics industry is rapidly flourishing, the availability aspect of the organic brand is a constraint (Misra R, & Singh D., 2016). According to the buyer's behaviour study, consumers transit towards 'characteristic' and 'natural' beautiful goods, because the products are associated with biodynamic and human-safe components. Women are expected to equip themselves with knowledge of beauty goods, personal grooming, changes in consumer habits and the lifestyle and enhance buying power. A drastic expansion in the market also can be observed as there is a growing preference for cosmetics such as natural goods, domestic products and herbal beauty products. (Pharmaadda, 2020). Innovative products that are clean and transparent will be the primary importance of the cosmetics sector for consumers. Transparency in innovation and ingredients implies that goods are more transparent in relation to claims, toxicity, effectiveness and ingredients with consumers. (Indian Cosmetic Sector Forecast, 2015)

The buying behaviour of the respondents included mainly (a) the frequency of purchase of the organic products (b) Mode of purchase of organic products (c) Reasons for choosing organic products. Figure 1 shows the buying behaviour of the respondents.

Among the 198 respondents, foods, green and vegetables were purchased on daily, biweekly and weekly basis. Apparels and Housing accessories were purchased on bimonthly and monthly manner and housing accessories and furnishings were bought annually. An significant point to note is that organic herbal cosmetics were the major product purchased by majority of the consumers on weekly and monthly basis. As per the data from Indian Cosmetic Sector Forecast, 2015 during the consumer behavior analysis, it was observed that consumers were increasingly shifting towards 'natural' and 'herbal' cosmetic products as it was associated with bio-active ingredients and safe for human skin. In addition to this, women were spending more on cosmetics as they are actively earning and spending money on grooming themselves.

With regard to mode of buying, 80 to 85% bought food, greens and vegetables and apparels from local stores. Housing accessories and furnishings were purchased from whole sale and branded shops.

Among all the organic products selected for the study, cosmetics and toiletries were the only product bought mostly from organic store and branded store. The reasons for opting for organic products by majority of the consumers included Environment friendly, Cost effective, Increase standard of living, Safe for health, Better lifestyle and Reputation in society

Consumers' preference to organic products is more due to the fact that they focus of food of high quality, purchased locally from trustworthy and reliable producers and suppliers. They are also interested in production methods, food safety, ways of preparing and storing products, analyze nutritional and health values of food, avoiding preservatives and allergens. (Smiglak-Krajewska. et.al, 2021).

The consumers also opined that they were not satisfied with the costing of the organic products as they are expensive. They also found lack of availability and quantity issues as a major problem with organic products.

4. Summary and Conclusion

The study proves that consumer behaviour plays a major role in Organic food products. The innovative and dynamic marketing strategies adopted by the marketers of organic foods has a major role in the changing purchase behaviour of consumers. Consumers give more importance to environmental sustainability and therefore shift towards organic products.

The study explained the fact that the people are well aware of the organic products available in the market as it pros and cons. The consumers also expect that the price of organic products can be made competitive with more number of shops selling organic products for the convenience of the consumers to buy them.

Implication, suggestions for future research

Despite the awareness among the consumers about the health benefits of using organic products, it is clear from the study that high costing of organic products, unavailability, lack of trust of consumers when it comes to the credibility of organic food certificates and advertising campaigns were the major concerns of the consumers. Future research should be carried out with entrepreneurs and all types of markets including online so as to understand the marketing strategies and sensory analysis adopted for marketing of organic products.

Also a cross study with few products of the same type developed by organic product manufacturers also would enlighten with more information the developing, marketing and analytical aspects of organic products. Awareness and further actions at government and personal level should be taken to promote sustainable product production, green marketing, and consumption of organic food. Information and knowledge to be provided to the public with regard to ways of identifying organic food and also as to how to develop skill in develop self-made organic products,

5. Figures and Tables

Table 1 Socio demographic and economic profile of the respondents

Details		No.	%
Type of Family	Nuclear	178	89.9
	Joint	20	10.1
Marital Status	Married	128	64.6
	Unmarried	52	26.3
	Separated	5	2.5
	Divorced	13	6.6
Income (Per Year)	>1,00,000	43	21.7
	1,00,000-3,00,000	62	31.3
	3,00,000-5,00,000	68	34.3
	<5,00,000	25	12.6
Occupation	Student	55	27.8
	Working Women	35	17.7
	Non-Working Women	26	13.1
	Professionals	118	59.6
	Retired	19	9.6
Education	High School	3	1.5
	Higher Secondary	5	2.5
	Graduates	46	23.2
	Post Graduates	55	27.8
	Professional	86	43.4
	Illiterates	3	1.5
Expenditure Pattern (in Rs. Per Year) *For average middle income family with salary of 6,00,000 per annum	Food	16000	45.7
	Greens & Veg	2000	5.7
	Apparels	1500	4.3
	Housing	12000	34.3
	Furnishings	1000	2.9
	Cosmetics & Toiletries	2500	7.1

Table 2: Preference level of consumers in buying organic products over commercial

Organic Products	Female		Male	
	No.	%	No.	%
Food And Drinks	58	43.0	44	69.8
Clothing	21	15.6	6	9.5
Home Decor	13	9.6	6	9.5
Cosmetics	43	31.9	7	11.1
Total	135	100.0	63	100.0

Table 3: Factors contributing to the purchase of organic products

Sl. No.	Factors	Respondents	
		No.	%
1	Product Pricing	162	81.8
2	Product Packaging	98	49.5
3	Product quantity	156	78.8
4	Product quality	180	90.9
5	Shelf Life	96	48.5
6	Ingredients	162	81.8
7	Accessibility to product information	170	85.9
8	Product Availability	172	86.9
9	Affordability	120	60.6
10	User Friendly	85	42.9
11	Branded Product	74	37.4
12	Reuse/Recycle products	78	39.4
13	Ready to use products	102	51.5
14	Health and Safety concerns	163	82.3
15	Personal Values	150	75.8
16	Environmental safety	114	57.6
17	Eco Labels	142	71.7
18	Freshness	85	42.9
19	Flavour	93	47.0
20	Appearance	90	45.5
21	Quality Assurance Certification	185	93.4
22	Place of production of the product	71	35.9
23	Plant based products	62	31.3
24	Use and throw/one time use products	99	50.0
25	Self-made products	192	97.0

Figure 1: Buying behavior of consumers

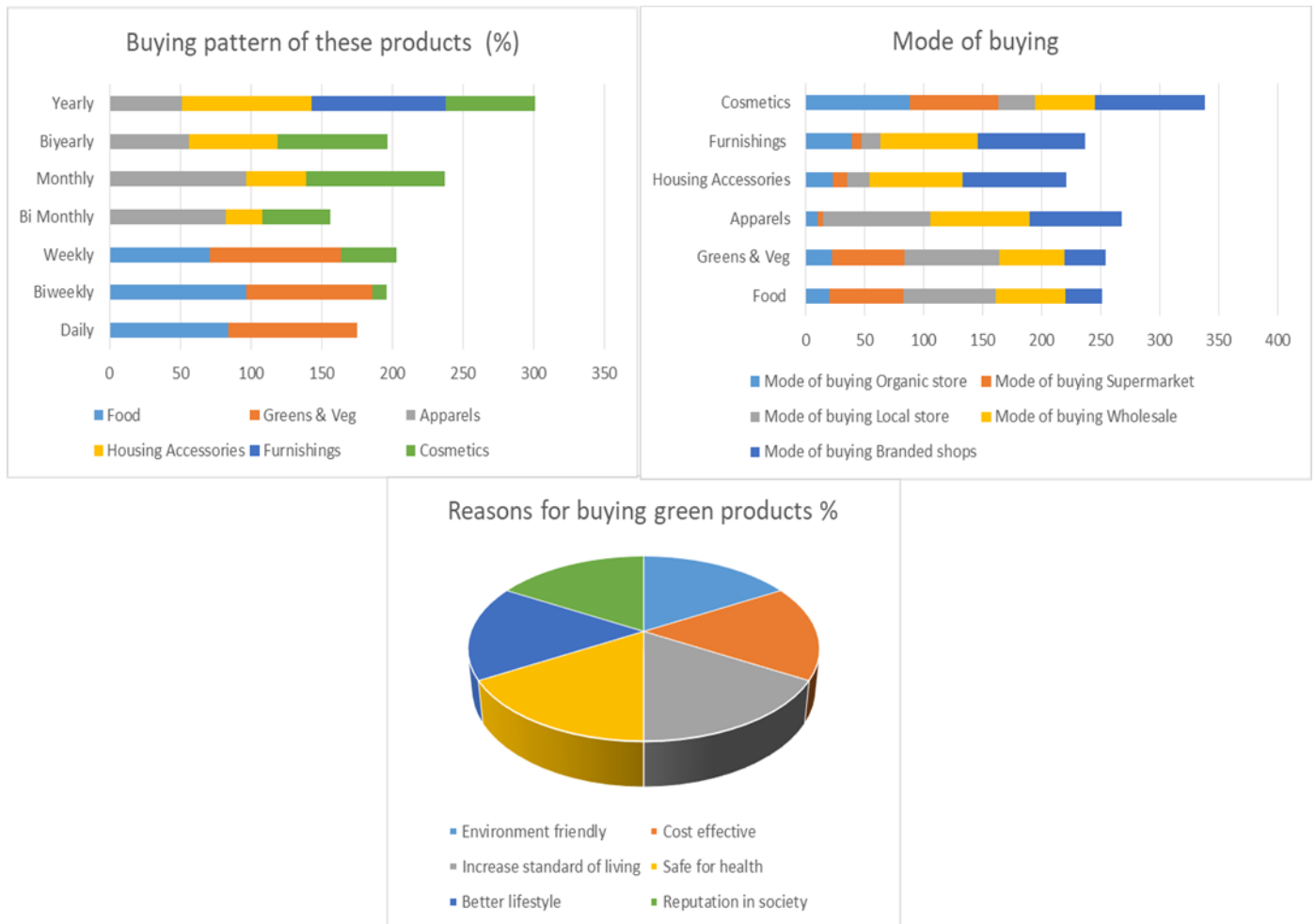
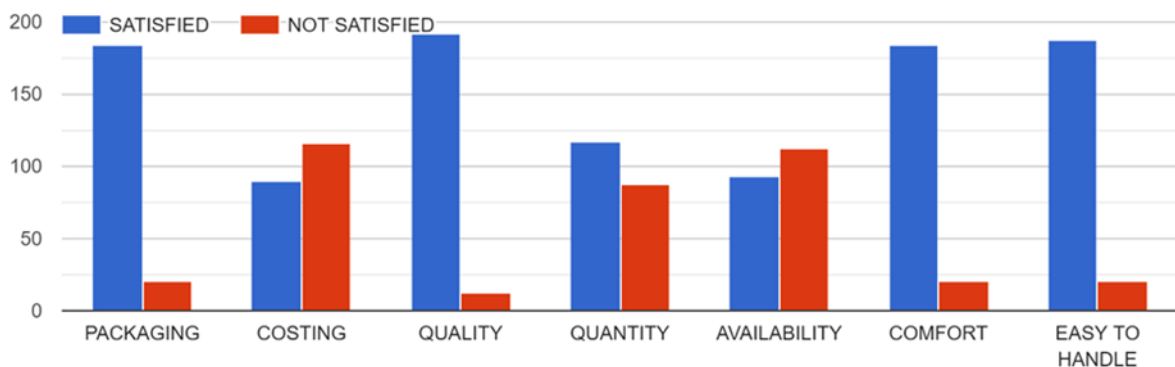


Figure 2: Satisfaction Level of consumers in using Organic Products



6. Authors' Biography

Dr. Sapna Dinesh currently working as Assistant Professor in Mount Carmel College, Bengaluru. She is a Doctorate holder in Resource Management and Design – Home Science. She has got more than 8 years of teaching and research experience in the areas of ergonomics and body mechanics, interior design, consumer studies and marketing and resource management.

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