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Study on consumer buying behaviour towards organic food products in Rayalaseema region of Andhra Pradesh

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Abstract

Growing awareness of food safety, environmental sustainability and health issues is creating demand for organic food products. This trend is rapidly growing throughout India's many socioeconomic and culturally diversified regions. The present study examines buying behaviour of consumers regarding organic food products in the Rayalaseema region of Andhra Pradesh. A descriptive research method was adopted and the primary data were collected from 250 respondents from five districts Kadapa, Chittoor, Tirupati, Nandyal and Kurnool using a structured questionnaire. The findings showed that most of the consumers are young, female and well educated with employees and students constituting the main occupational categories. The main reasons influencing the choice of buying organic food are its high nutritional content, ability to reduce health problems and good product quality. The majority of consumers choose to purchase organic food items from organic markets and supermarkets where the most preferred products are fresh fruits and vegetables. Insights from this study can help producers, marketers and policymakers to develop strategies that will expand the market and improve the availability of organic food products in this region.

Keywords: Buying intention, Consumer Behaviour, Food Safety, Organic Foods

Introduction

The rapid growth in the industrial development together with the population explosion is increasing the pressure on the agricultural production methods to improve the yield of the crops (Basha *et al.*, 2015) ^[3]. The Green Revolution in the agricultural sector had led to the application of synthetic fertilizers to increase yields without concern for environmental impact (Hossain & Lim, 2016) ^[10]. As a result, rising concerns over food safety and environmental sustainability have encouraged a growing preference for organic food products. The changes in the consumers' lifestyle, tastes and preferences, standard of living as well as purchasing and technical advancement in agriculture and marketing have led to increasing demand for organic food products (Wandel & Bugge, 1997). Kataria *et al.* (2018) ^[19, 11] define organic food as a type of plant or animal products that are produced without using growth hormones, antibiotics, conventional synthetic fertilizers and pesticides, or genetically modified organisms. As per the FAO/WHO Codex Alimentarius Commission (2007), organic agriculture is an integrated management system that aims to enhance the health of agro-ecosystems by promoting biodiversity, biological cycles and soil activity. It emphasizes the use of natural inputs, such as minerals and plant-based materials and rejects the application of synthetic fertilizers and pesticides. Organic foods are now creating attention in many developing countries as they can achieve environmental benefits for the public sector as well as international trade exchange for the private sector (Rehber and Turhan, 2002) ^[16]. The importance of organic food products in the global food industry and consumption trends has increased significantly. Global organic food production is expected to grow rapidly and is classified as one of the biggest growth markets in the food industry (Baker, 2004; Gifford & Bernard, 2005) ^[1, 8]. Demographic factors such as health, education and availability positively affect the consumer's attitude towards purchasing organic food products. Consumers express more satisfaction with organic food than with inorganic food (Paul and Rana 2012) ^[15]. This study aims to examines the consumer buying behavior towards organic foods in the Rayalaseema region of Andhra Pradesh.

Review of Literature

Mehra and Ratna (2014) ^[13] found younger consumers and female prefer organic foods. They carefully read labels and compare product information before selecting healthy foods. These consumers are willing to pay more for food that is both tasty and healthy.

Harper & Makatouni (2000) and Chinnici *et al.* (2002) ^[9, 6] found that consumers have positive attitude towards organic products where one of the most commonly mentioned reasons for purchasing them was that consumers perceive organic products as healthier than conventional alternatives. Singh & Verma (2017) ^[17] found that health consciousness, knowledge, price, subjective norms and availability play an important role in organic food consumption by highlighting the fact that accessibility and affordability are key determinants alongside individual awareness and social pressures.

Pandurangarao *et al.* (2017) ^[14] found that health, safety, environmental concerns, price and accessibility all were having a significant effect on consumers' choices to purchase organic food. Environmental concern and consumer behaviour were found to be highly related.

Basha & Lal (2019) ^[2] found that consumer intention about purchase of organic food is influenced by environmental concerns, social norms, safety, trust and convenience. This highlights the importance of ethical and practical factors in organic food purchases.

Sreedevi and Katyayani (2021) ^[18] studied consumer behaviour in Tirupati, Andhra Pradesh found that health, safety, and taste were main motivators. Education and income levels also played a role in preferring organic food products.

Boobalan *et al.* (2022) and Khan *et al.* (2022) ^[5, 12] found that attitudes, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, response efficacy, and self-expressive benefits shape consumer decisions. These findings imply that buying organic food is a rational choice made by consumers.

Objectives of the study

This study was carried out with the following objectives:

- To study the socio-economic profile of consumers of organic food products
- To study the buying behaviour of consumers towards organic food products

Materials and Methods

Research Design

This study follows a descriptive research design, as it aims to analyze consumer buying behaviour towards organic food products in a specific region.

Sample selection

The research was conducted in the Rayalaseema region of Andhra Pradesh from five districts: Kadapa, Chittoor, Tirupati, Nandyal and Kurnool. 50 respondents were selected from each district, making a total of 250 respondents from the study area. The sampling method used was non-probability convenience sampling, where respondents were selected based on their availability and willingness to respond.

Data Collection Instrument

A Structured questionnaire was used in this study to examine consumer buying behaviour towards organic food

products. To identify various aspects of consumer behaviour the questionnaire was divided into two parts. The first part of the questionnaire collected socio-demographic information of the respondents. The items related to the reasons for purchasing organic foods and preferred place of purchase were adapted from Baydas *et al* (2021) ^[4], While questions on frequency and period of usage were taken from Yi (2009) ^[20].

Data collection

Primary data was collected directly from consumers through a structured questionnaire. Questionnaires were distributed only to those respondents who were aware of organic food products.

Statistical Tools

To assess the socio-economic profile and buying behaviour of respondents, descriptive measures such as frequencies and percentages were used.

Results and Discussion

Socio-economic profile of the consumers

The Socio-economic profile of the consumers is presented in Table 1. The sample consists of 57% female and 43% male respondents. Majority of the respondents (66%) belong to the age group of 20-30 years, followed by 15.6% in the 31-40 age group. 61.2% are graduates, while 24.4% have completed post-graduation. Regarding occupation, 52% of the respondents are students, followed by 32.8% employees. Majority of the households (77.6%) have 4-6 members. With respect to monthly income, 32.4% of the respondents fall within the ₹25,001-₹50,000 income bracket, while 29.6% earn below ₹25,000.

Table 1: Socio-economic profile of the consumers

Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Female	142	57
Male	108	43
Age (Years)		
Below 20	33	13.2
20 - 30	165	66
31 - 40	39	15.6
41 - 50	12	4.8
Above 50	1	0.4
Education		
Below SSC	1	0.4
SSC	13	5.2
HSC	22	8.8
Graduation	153	61.2
Post-Graduation	61	24.4
Occupation		
Student	130	52
Business	23	9.2
House wife	15	6
Employee	82	32.8
Number of members in the family		
1 - 3	42	16.8
4 - 6	194	77.6
Above 7	14	5.6
Monthly Income (in rupees)		
Below 25,000	74	29.6
25,001 - 50,000	81	32.4
50,001 - 75,000	49	19.6
75,001 - 1,00,000	26	10.4
Above 1,00,000	20	8

Buying behaviour of consumers towards organic food products

Table 2: Reasons for purchasing organic foods is presented (Based on Multiple Responses)

Reasons	Frequency	Percentage
High nutritional value	248	99.2
It does not contain drugs and hormone additives	232	92.8
Be of good quality	235	94
Reducing health problems	239	95.6
Fresher than conventional foods	227	90.8
Good taste	227	90.8
Beautiful packaging	196	78.4

Table 2 present the reasons behind consumers purchase of organic food products. It shows that the major reason for purchasing organic food products among consumers is their high nutritional value (99.2%), followed by their ability to reduce health problems (95.6%), good product quality (94.0%) and absence of drugs and hormone additives

(92.8%). Other reasons are their freshness compared to conventional foods and good taste. These findings indicate that consumers prefer organic food mainly because of its health benefits, higher quality that reflects an increasing awareness towards health.

Table 3: Consumer behaviour towards the buying and usage pattern of organic foods

Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
Preferred place for purchase		
General store	27	10.8
Organic market	135	54
Supermarkets	65	26
Online shopping	23	9.2
Frequency of purchase		
Daily	15	6
Weekly once	157	62.8
Alternate days	51	20.4
Monthly once	27	10.8
Period of usage		
0 to 6 months	78	31.2
6 to 12 months	97	38.8
1 to 2 years	47	18.8
Above 2 years	28	11.2

Table 3 present the consumer preferred place of purchase, period of usage and frequency of purchase of organic food products in the Rayalaseema region of Andhra Pradesh. From the results, the maximum respondents (54%), purchased organic foods from organic markets, followed by supermarkets (26%), while a few consumers purchased organic food products from General store (10.8%) and online platforms (9.2%). Regarding frequency of purchase, majority of the consumers purchase organic foods on a

weekly basis (62.8%). With respect to the duration of organic food product usage 38.8% of respondents have been using them for 6-12 months, whereas 31.2% of respondents used them for up to 6months. From the findings, consumers have developed a regular purchasing behaviour and stated that they prefer organized markets while buying organic products, reflecting their increasing acceptance and trust in organic food products.

Table 4: Purchase of different types of organic foods (Based on multiple responses)

Sr. No	Food products	Always f (%)	Mostly f (%)	Sometimes f (%)	Rarely f (%)	Never f (%)
1	Organic fresh vegetables and fruits	167 (66.8%)	62 (24.8%)	4 (1.6%)	16 (6.4%)	1 (0.4%)
2	Organic drinks(Milk, Tea, Juice..)	103 (41.2%)	75 (30%)	4 (1.6%)	61 (24.4%)	7 (2.8%)
3	Organic spices	54 (21.6%)	92 (36.8%)	6 (2.4%)	92 (36.8%)	6 (2.4%)
4	Organic cereals and legumes	72 (28.8%)	94 (37.6%)	7 (2.8%)	71 (28.4%)	6 (2.4%)
5	Organic dry fruits	78 (31.2%)	65 (26%)	7 (2.8%)	90 (36%)	10 (4%)
6	Organic milk and dairy products	94 (37.6%)	76 (30.4%)	4 (1.6%)	66 (26.4%)	10 (4%)
7	Organic tomato pastes and oils	74 (29.6%)	71 (28.4%)	7 (2.8%)	81 (32.4%)	17 (6.8%)
8	Organic sugary products(honey, molasses, fruit pulp)	66 (26.4%)	67 (26.8%)	7 (2.8%)	94 (37.6%)	16 (6.4%)

Table 4 shows the frequency of purchases made by consumers in the Rayalaseema region of Andhra Pradesh on a variety of organic food products. It is found that organic fruits and vegetables are purchased most frequently, followed by organic milk and dairy products. Some consumers purchase organic cereals and legumes regularly with spices, dry fruits, tomato paste, oils and sugar products being purchased less often. These findings show that consumers mostly rely on the consumption of organic fresh and essential food products regularly, while processed organic food products are consumed less regularly.

Conclusion

This study indicates an increasing preference for organic food products in the Rayalaseema area of Andhra Pradesh. Key findings show that age, occupation, and education as socio-economic characteristics are affecting consumer buying behaviour. The main reasons for purchasing organic food products are its nutritional value, ability to reduce health problems and quality. Fresh vegetables and fruits are the most commonly purchased organic products, which are mostly bought in organic markets and supermarkets. Even though the usage of organic foods is increasing, awareness and availability should be improved to expand the consumer base. The results suggest that targeted promotional strategies and consumer education can significantly enhance the reach of organic food products. The study provides important implications for producers, marketers and policymakers that promote sustainable consumption behaviours and growth of organic food sector in the region.

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