

THE IMPACT OF MOTIVATING FACTORS AND ORGANIC SKEPTICISM ON CONSUMER'S PERCEPTION W.R.T. ORGANIC PRODUCTS

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ABSTRACT

Consumer perceptions of organic products have become an increasingly significant area of research as the demand for organic food continues to grow. Studies have demonstrated that consumers generally associate organic products with health benefits, environmental sustainability, and superior product quality. Many consumers perceive organic foods as being devoid of pesticides, hormones, and genetically modified organisms, which they believe contributes to improved personal and environmental health. However, researches have also indicated that price remains a substantial barrier for some consumers, as organic products are often costlier than their conventional counterparts are. This study mainly focuses on factors such as quality and taste, availability, social influence, labeling clarity, and confidence in certification processes which plays crucial role in purchasing of organic products. Additionally, the topic of organic skepticism and misconceptions that cause misunderstanding among organic consumers was covered. Comprehending these perceptions is essential for retailers and producers to effectively market organic products and address consumer concerns, ultimately influencing purchasing decisions in the food market.

KEYWORDS: Consumer perception, Organic food, Organic products, organic skepticism and misconceptions

INTRODUCTION

Considering different nations have varying prerequisites for products to be certified “organic”

There is no universally accepted definition of what “organic” means. An ecological management production system that supports and improves biological cycles, biodiversity, and soil biological activity constitutes what signifies by the term “organic”. The basis of this approach is the conservative use of off-farm inputs and management techniques that preserve, improve, and restore “ecological harmony”. The two main factors driving customers to buy organic products are their perceived health benefits and their concern for the environment. (B. Roitner schobesberger et al., 2010). Consumers found that Quality, health, nutritional values, taste and freshness and environmental sustainability were playing major role in forming favourable opinion towards organic products. For successful marketing strategy, marketers must increase their promotional activities and availability of the products in the market. (D.Mythili et al., 2020). Studies have found that consumer perception often extend beyond just the product’s intrinsic qualities, reflecting broader societal concerns such as sustainability and ethical practices in production (Lockie et al., 2002). In addition, the role of social influence, media, and personal values also influence perception and purchasing decisions in complex ways (Grankvist & Biel, 2001). Another study on consumer perception towards organic products noted on analyzing the potential markets and the constraint in marketing of organic products. Irregular availability, too expensive, misconceptions,

the lack of awareness, not properly certified were obstacles to be overcome in the organic market. (Dr H.M. Chandrashekar, 2014). In this article, explored the perceptions and understand the factors driving consumer behavior towards organic products, providing a comprehensive overview of the current landscape in consumer attitudes towards organic consumption.

OBJECTIVES

Based on the literature review, the objectives of the study are

1. To look into various facets of how consumers perceive organic food products through the scholarly research articles.
2. To Examine the factors motivating for consumption of organic food products.
3. To observe the impact of skepticism and misconception on consumer's purchasing decisions

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

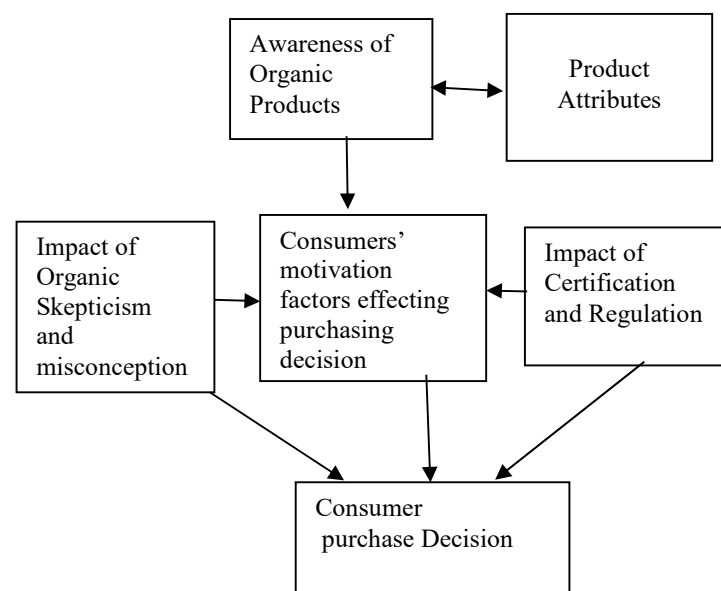
The data has been collected from the secondary data sources. Information was collected from several kinds of research papers published in journals and the internet database in order to review the vast body of literature related to the consumer perception on organic food items.

1.1 AWARENESS OF ORGANIC PRODUCTS

- General Awareness: Geographical, demographic, and market maturity elements all affect consumer awareness of organic products. According to research, wealthy nations tend to have greater awareness than developing ones. Gracia and de Magistris (2008) found that consumers in Europe were

highly aware of organic certifications and standards. However, in developing economies like India and China, awareness is rising but remains limited to urban, educated populations (Aertsens et al., 2011)

- Role Of Certification: Organic Certification has considerable impact on the general public's opinion. Research shows that reputable certifications like USDA Organic or EU Organic boost exposure and confidence. However, in certain areas, a lack of established laws and label confusion could cause it difficult for consumers to comprehend (Hughner et al., 2007)
- Source of Information: The main source of awareness includes advertising campaigns, the media, and word-of-mouth. Rana and Paul (2017) noted that websites and social media platforms have become important sources of knowledge about organic products in recent years.



1.2. The Impact of Product Attributes on Consumer Perception of Organic Products

Growing consumer awareness of environmental sustainability, ethical issues, and health issues has contributed to a notable increase in demand for organic products in recent years. Understanding the elements affecting customer's perception of organic products has become crucial for producers, marketers, and governments as consumers increasingly look for items that reflect their values.

- **Health Benefits:**

Since Organic products are free from synthetic chemicals, pesticides, or genetically modified organisms (GMOs), consumers often consider them as safer and healthier choices than conventional goods. Based on Research, Customers who value their health are more inclined to select organic items because they believe they are less detrimental to their bodies. (Chryssochoidis et al., 2009).

Consumer behavior is significantly influenced by the belief that organic products are devoid of dangerous chemicals and artificial additives: Health-conscious people frequently correlate organic labels to better product quality and safety. (Saba & Messina, 2003).

- **Price Sensitivity:**

While the health benefits of organic products are significant, the price remains a key attribute that influences consumer perception. In light of their lower yields and more labor-intensive farming practices, organic products are frequently more expensive than their conventional

counterparts. According to research that has demonstrated this, Price sensitivity is an essential variable in the decision to buy organic products. (Zepeda & Li, 2006). Higher-income consumers are usually more willing to spend more for organic items, while consumers on less disposable income might think that organic products are too costly, which would limit their usage. (Umberger et al., 2003). Price perception can therefore either be beneficial or detrimental to organic products' overall appeal to consumers.

- **Packaging and labeling:**

Clear and accurate labeling, including certifications such as USDA Organic seal or other recognized standards, helps build trust and transparency in the product. Based on the research, customers use labels as a primary means of determining the authenticity of products, and certifications increase their trust in the product's organic content. (Grankvist & Biel, 2001). Additionally, consumers are increasingly using recyclable packaging to make decisions, especially those who value sustainability throughout a product lifecycle. (Wang et al., 2019).

- **Quality and Taste of organic products**

Organic food has gained popularity because of its superior taste, environmental sustainability, and alleged health benefits. Although consumers tend to believe that organic products are of higher quality and taste better, the scientific data supporting these assertions varies from study to study.

Perceived and Actual Quality

- **Nutritional Composition**

Organic foods are frequently promoted as being healthier than their regular counterparts. Research shows that specific vitamins, antioxidants, and phenolic compounds are more abundant in organic fruits and vegetables. Based on the study organic crops had more antioxidant levels compared to conventional crops. (Baranski et al., 2014). In another study argued that nutritional value between organic and conventional food is minimal and may not be nutritionally relevant. (Smith-Spangler et al., 2012).

- Chemical Residues

Organic farming limits the use of synthetic fertilizers and pesticides, organic products have fewer pesticide residues. (Winter & Davis, 2006). This aspect contributes to the perception of organic food being “cleaner” and safer.

- Freshness and Shelf Life

As organic supply chains are shorter, organic produce is often believed to be fresher; but, because synthetic preservatives are used less frequently, its shelf life may be shorter. (Mie et al., 2017)

Taste and Sensory Qualities

- Consumer Perception

Organic products are often thought to taste better by consumers. The “halo effect” is one psychological component that affects this perception. (Hughner et al., 2007). Even when the product is exactly the same as a conventional version, consumers’ judgements of flavor might be influenced by organic labels.

- Sensory Analysis

Controlled sensory evaluations yield mixed results. For example:

Blind tasting testing revealed that organic fruits, such as strawberries and apples, had a higher flavor. (Crinnion, 2010).

As contrary, no reliable proof that, across a range of food categories, organic items taste better than conventional ones. (Torjusen et al., 2001).

- Production Methods and Taste

Fruits and vegetables may taste better owing to organic agricultural techniques including varied crop rotations and the use of natural fertilizers. A common rationale for why organic fruits tastes better is the condition of the soil. (Reganold & Wachter, 2016)

- Consumer Expectation and Reality

Customer demands for higher quality and flavor are driving the expansion of the organic products market. However, Product type, farming methods, and post-harvest management can all have a substantial impact on taste and quality. (Johansson et al., 2014). Furthermore, whereas some studies support these assertions, others conclude that the differences are insignificant or arbitrary.

1.3. Impact of consumer Motivation for Purchasing Organic Products

Understanding consumer motivations for purchasing organic products is essential for developing effective marketing strategies and fostering sustainable consumption. This review explores the psychological, social, and economic factors that influence consumer decisions to choose organic over conventional products.

Key Motivations for Organic Purchase

Health concerns

Health is frequently mentioned as the primary reason that people purchase natural products. As organic food lacks chemical fertilizers, synthetic pesticides, or genetically modified organisms, consumers believe it to be safer and healthier. (Yadav & Pathak, 2016).

- **Nutritional Beliefs:** Although there is conflicting scientific data, research indicates that people feel organic food has more nutritional value. (Aschemann-witzel & Zielke, 2017).
- **Food Safety:** Organic purchasing is motivated by worries about food contamination and the long-term health repercussions of conventional farming chemicals. (Hughner et al., 2007).

Environmental concerns

Consumers believe organic products are better for the environment, people who are driven by environmental sustainability tend to prefer them. Reduced pesticide use and better soil management are two benefits of organic farming that appeal to environmentally aware consumers. (Paul & Rana, 2012).

- **Climate change and Biodiversity:** Consumer preference is further reinforced by comprehension of organic farming's contribution to biodiversity preservation and climate change mitigation. (Padel & Foster, 2005).

Ethical and Social Values

Ethical considerations such as fair trade, animal welfare, and sustainable farming practices influence consumer choices.

- **Animal Welfare:** Consumers' trust in organic dairy and meat products is increased because they often link organic farming to the humane treatment of animals. (Harper & Makatouni, 2002).
- **Social Responsibility:** Buying organic is frequently seen as a socially conscious action that benefits rural areas and small-scale producers. (Smith & Paladino, 2010).

Taste and Quality

A large number of people believe that organic food is superior to conventional food in terms of taste and quality. The notion that organic farming methods create fresher and more flavorful products is frequently the driving force behind such ideas. (Lockie et al., 2002).

Psychological and Emotional Factors

- **The Halo Effect:** Customers frequently develop a positive bias as a result of the "organic" label, believing that organic goods are better in every way, including sustainability, quality, and health. (Aschemann-Witzel & Zielke, 2017).
- **Emotional Satisfaction:** Buying organic products give customers who respect sustainability and moral behavior emotional fulfillment, which strengthens their positive outlooks. (Aertsens et al., 2011).

Influence of Demographics and Social Norms

- **Age, Income, and Education:** Those who are younger, wealthier, and better educated are more inclined to buy organic goods. (Hughner et al., 2007).
- **Cultural Influences:** Consumer motivation is influenced by society perceptions about organic farming and cultural norms. For instance, European customers' greater environmental consciousness makes them more likely to buy organic items. (Grunert & Juhl. 1995).
- **Social Norms:** Purchases are also driven by peer opinions and the rising acceptance of organic food as a lifestyle choice. (Smith & Paladino, 2010).

1.4. Impact of Organic Skepticism and Misconceptions

Even while organic products are becoming more popular, a sizable percentage of consumers are still suspicious about their positive aspects, frequently as a result of misconceptions. This review of the literature investigates the causes and effects of organic skepticism by looking at attitudes at the consumer and market scales.

Key Factors Contributing to Organic Skepticism

1. Perceived Lack of Scientific Evidence

One of the primary reasons for skepticism about organic products is the perceived lack of robust scientific evidence supporting their claimed health benefits. Many consumers question whether organic foods are truly more nutritious or safer than conventional foods.

- **Nutritional Misconceptions:** Despite data indicating that organic food may contain fewer pesticide residues and more greater amounts of specific minerals (Baranski et al., 2014), consumers are often unconvinced by these findings. This disillusionment stems from the dearth of large-scale definitive research showing distinct, meaningful variations in health outcomes. (Smith-Spangler et al., 2012).

Price Sensitivity and Value Perception

Although organic foods are usually more expensive than conventional ones, many may believe that they don't offer enough benefits to warrant the extra cost.

- **Cost vs Quality:** Many customers wonder if there is a significant difference in quality, flavor, or health advantages that justifies the extra cost of organic products. Research revealed that even among people who are typically aware of the advantages of consuming organic food, cost is one of the main discouragement. (Hughner et al., 2007)

Common Misconceptions about Organic Products

Organic Farming cannot feed the world

The belief that organic farming cannot satisfy the world's food demand because it is less productive than conventional farming is major misconception about it. The lower yield per hectare of organic farming, according to critics, hinders its ability to provide enough food to feed the increasing world population.

- **Yield Concerns;** While organic farming tends to have lower yields in some contexts (Seufert et al., 2012), studies also show that organic farming can be highly productive under the right conditions, with benefits to biodiversity and soil health (Reganold & Wachter, 2016).

Organic Food Tastes Better and Is Healthier

Research may not always support the notion that organic food is always healthier and tastes better. Due to variations in farming methods, some research has indicated that organic fruits and vegetables may have marginally superior flavor profiles (Lockie et al., 2002). Others claim no consistent evidence of taste superiority (Torjusen et al., 2001).

- **Health Benefits:** Although organic food is free of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) and frequently has lower pesticide levels, its overall health benefits are still u for debate. (Smith-Spangler et al. 2012).

Media Influence and Biased Reporting

Public impressions of organic products are significantly shaped by media attention. Misconceptions are worsened by the media's often sensationalized or biased presentations of organic food.

- **Exaggerated Claims:** Unrealistic customer expectations result from certain media outlet's emphasis on unsubstantiated claims about organic foods, which are presented as miraculous cures or superior in every way. (Guthman, 2004).

Influence of Social and Peer Networks

Social circles can also give rise to skepticism regarding organic products

because people frequently base their opinion on the views or experiences of their peers. Doubts regarding the advantages of organic products might be strengthened by negative opinions about organic agricultural methods or health claims that proliferate on social media. (Hughner et al., 2007)

1.5. Impact of Organic Certifications and Regulations on Consumer Perception in Purchasing Organic Products

In the organic food industry, consumer views and purchase decisions are greatly influenced by organic certification and regulation. As consumers become increasingly worried about the legitimacy of organic claims, certification programs offer a mechanism to assure product quality and integrity.

The role of Organic certification in Consumer Perception

Trust and Credibility

In the market for organic foods, consumer trust is a major determinant of purchase behavior, and organic certifications are crucial to fostering this confidence. Certifications act as an assurance that goods fulfill specific standards and follow moral agricultural methods. Many customers use a certified organic label as an indication of the authenticity, safety, and quality of a product.

Transparency and Information

Transparency regarding product origin, production processes, and farming techniques is offered by organic certifications. Consumer impressions may be greatly impacted by this transparency, since contemporary customers are becoming

more interested in learning about the origins and production methods of the food they eat.

- **Informed Decision-Making:** Customers can make better judgements based on their values and preferences when certification labels are available. Organic certificates disseminate knowledge about social responsibility, environmental sustainability, and ethical behaviour. (Padel & Foster, 2005). As a result, certifications improve customers' comprehension of the product's actual organic nature by bridging the information gap between producers and consumers.

Influence of Certification on Purchasing Decisions

The presence of organic certification on packaging directly influences consumers' purchasing decision. Studies show that consumers perceive certified organic products as more trustworthy and are more likely to purchase them over non-certified alternatives (Hughner et al., 2007). Furthermore, some research indicates that certified organic products are seen as premium goods, which justifies their higher price.

Premium Pricing and Consumer Willingness:

Premium pricing and consumer willingness: In the market, certified organic foods are more expensive. However, because of the perceived benefits in terms of health, environmental effect, and ethical practices, consumers are frequently prepared to pay more for products that are certified organic.

Impact of Certification Labels on consumer Perception

Familiarity and trust in Certification Labels

Customers' familiarity with the label has a significant impact on how they perceive organic certification. Because they are linked to stricter quality control and higher standards, consumers who are familiar with well-known certifications (such as USDA Organic and EU Organic) are more likely to trust these brands.

Misleading labels and Consumer Confusion

- **Confusion due to labeling variety:** Customers may become confused if there are several organic labels available, each with its own standards and requirements. Because customers could not always understand what each certification means, this misunderstanding could reduce the perceived value of organic certificates. Some nations have responded to this by implementing more uniform certification procedures in an effort to guarantee uniformity and lessen consumer misunderstanding. (Aertsens et al., 2011)

Influence of Regulations on Organic Certification

Government rules and guidelines are essential to preserving consumer confidence in organic goods. Organic farming is governed by strict laws in many nations, guaranteeing that the final products fulfill safety and sustainability standards. In addition to preventing false claims, regulatory frameworks aid in distinguishing organic products from conventional ones.

- **Global Regulatory Standards:** More uniformity in organic certification

has been facilitated by the international harmonization of organic standards, such as those set forth by the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM). By guaranteeing that goods fulfill accepted international criteria, this has promoted customer confidence in the organic sector. (Crespi et al., 2013).

- Local and regional regulations: The integrity of organic products is also significantly ensured by local and regional laws in addition to international requirements. For instance, customers rely on certain, government- regulated criteria when purchasing organic products, such as the USDA Organic certification in the United States and the EU Organic label in Europe. (Padel & Foster, 2005)

Conclusion

Consumers are becoming more conscious of the negative impacts of chemicals found in food. Buying organic food is becoming more and more popular. It is crucial to carry out research to determine the factors that genuinely influence consumers to choose organic food. Concerns about the environment, lifestyle and health, product quality, and subjective norms are some of the main drivers behind the purchasing of organic foods. As per studies customers are willing to pay more to organic if they convinced with the benefits and value they receive. Governments and policy makers must provide clarity on certification procedures, guidelines on standards, price fixation methods, regulations on supply and demand, would improve the organic food

market. Promotion campaigns, exhibitions, farmers markets could benefit the customers to interact with the experts and get informative reduce the organic skepticism among the customers.

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