



Consumer Perception and Awareness towards Organic Food in the National Capital Region

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ABSTRACT

The growing demand for organic food in recent years has led to increase an interest in studying consumers' attitude and perception towards organic food products. The study explores consumer perception and awareness towards organic food in Haryana's National Capital Region (NCR), with an emphasis on demographic variables and market dynamics. Primary data was collected from a sample of 300 respondents using a structured questionnaire between the months of September-October 2023 year. Factor analysis revealed two significant factors influencing consumers' attitude were "Attitudes towards Organic Food" and "Consumer Perception and Market Dynamics." While consumers in the NCR reflected positive attitudes towards organic food, driven by perceptions of health and environmental benefits, location was found to have no significant effect on attitudes but does influence perceptions of market dynamics. The study highlights the importance of consumer awareness and understanding market dynamics for promoting sustainable consumption patterns and engaging stakeholders in the organic food industry. Overall, these findings contribute to a better understanding of consumer behavior towards organic food products in the context of the NCR region, offering insights for policymakers, farmers, and industry stakeholders to promote organic food consumption and production.

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, extensive surge in demand for organic food products has been seen, driven by growing consumer knowledge and concerns about health, sustainability, and environmental protection. This growing interest towards organic food products has led to an escalation in organic food production globally, as farmers adapt to changing consumer preferences and market trends. The growing evidence of organic farming indicated that the practice resulted in a lot of environmental, social, and financial benefits (Gills et al., 2013; Gillis et al., 2021). Need for institutional support in creating awareness in technological advancement of organic farming, diversification of cropping system and in increasing

accessibility of off-farm organic inputs has always been felt (Malik et al., 2023). Good Agricultural Practices (GAPs) in the global market place, by translating consumer requirements into agricultural production and the concerns and commitments of a wide range of stakeholders about food production and security, food safety, quality and the environmental sustainability of agriculture. (Nain et al., 2020). Consumers attitude towards organic food have earned significant attention to growing concerns about health and more sustainable dietary choices (Hughner et al., 2007; De Magistris & Gracia, 2008; Hjelm, 2011; Baudry et al., 2017). Individuals become more conscious of their dietary choices, considering the important factors that influence perceptions and awareness towards organic food products. This study aims to delve into the particulars

of consumers attitude and perception towards organic food, exploring key demographic components and their association with these factors in the context of Haryana's National Capital Region (NCR). In the National Capital Region (NCR) of Haryana, India, consumer attitudes towards organic food play a critical role in shaping consumption patterns and market dynamics. The NCR region, covering urban centres like Gurugram, Faridabad, Panipat, and Sonapat, represents a diverse demographic landscape with varying socio-economic backgrounds and lifestyle preferences. Exploring consumer attitudes towards organic food in this context provides valuable insights into the factors driving consumer behavior and market trends. Previous studies emphasized on the importance of factors such as health consciousness, environmental concerns, and perceived product attributes in shaping consumer attitudes towards organic food (Hughner et al., 2007; Hjelmar, 2011). However, the interrelation between agricultural practices, consumer awareness and market dynamics within the framework of organic food production for his collaborative efforts need to be taken between agricultural extension services and consumer education programs to bridge the gap between farm-level practices and consumer perception.

Concurrently, farmers are rejoining to this growing demand by adopting organic farming practices and shifting towards organic food production. This change is driven not only by market forces but also by an acknowledgement among farmers of the negative effects of conventional farming methods on soil health, biodiversity, and long-term sustainability. Chipang et al., (2022) highlighted the economic viability and profitability of organic farming, further incentivizing farmers to embrace organic practices as a more sustainable and financially rewarding alternative. Jaganathan et al., (2010) emphasized that organic farmers expressed significant concern regarding both human health and soil health. However, despite the favourable attitudes towards organic farming among both consumers and farmers, challenges persist at various stages of the organic food supply chain. Farmers may encounter barriers such as the high cost of organic certification, limited access to organic inputs, and technical knowledge gaps related to organic farming practices (Malik et al., 2023). Similarly, consumers may face obstacles such as limited availability, higher prices, and uncertainty about the authenticity of organic products. In essence, the rising demand for organic food and the corresponding increase in organic food production represent a pivotal moment in the evolution of agriculture and food systems worldwide.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed both primary and secondary data collected from four districts within the National Capital Region of Haryana. Employed area sampling as its sampling method. This methodology entails stratifying the sample proportionally to the number of stores selling organic food across the four districts of the NCR region in Haryana. The rationale behind this approach is the assumption that areas with a higher density of organic food stores correspond to a larger consumer base, and vice versa. The primary data was collected through a well-structured questionnaire consisting of two sections. The first section captured demographic information, while the second section contained all ten items

pertaining to the awareness level of the consumer. A sample of 300 customers who either purchased organic food items or had some prior experience with them were chosen to provide data for the study. The data was collected between September to October 2023. The aim of the paper's framework is to examine the attitudes and levels of awareness that customers have regarding organic food, along with the demographic factors that could impact these perceptions. Utilizing the Rensis Likert five-point scale, meticulously measured ten statements to gauge awareness levels among consumers. Descriptive statistics, factor analysis, ANOVA, and reliability were all determined using IBM SPSS-22 software. The elements that significantly affect customers' attitudes, perceptions, and levels of awareness regarding organic food were identified through the application of factor analysis. On the other hand, analysis of variance was done to find out the effect of demographic variables such as location on the factors extracted, null hypothesis has been formulated and tested. Ho (1): The attitude of customers toward organic food is not significantly influenced by location. Ho (2): The perception and market dynamics associated the consumption of organic food are significantly influenced by location. The information collected followed extensive statistical analysis to identify any pertinent connections or effects.

RESULTS

According to (Table 1), the data is appropriate for factor analysis with a Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy score of 0.782. The Bartlett's Test of Sphericity result is significant, and the p-value of.000 indicates that the connections between the variables are sufficiently large to support factor analysis.

Table 1. KMO and Bartlett's Test Measure for Sampling Adequacy

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy		.782
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	2615.958
	df	45
	Sig.	.000
Cronbach's Alpha		.862
No of Items		10

Two factors were extracted out of 10 items of consumers' awareness level included in the questionnaire, which together explain 74.352 per cent of the total variance. The first factor describes 53.322 per cent of the variance, while the second explains 21.030 per cent as shown in (Table 2). These factors, as described in (Table 2), labelled as "attitudes towards organic food" and "consumer perception and market dynamics". The first factor is names as "attitudes towards organic food" is considered by statements highlighting the natural, environmental, and health-related benefits of organic food products. The highest factor loading in this factor is 0.905 for statement organic food is grown by using natural methods and the lowest factor loading in this factor is 0.701 for the statement organic food is much more expensive than conventionally grown food. Cronbach's alpha value for this factor is 0.931, indicating high reliability. The total variance is explained by the attitudes towards organic food is 53.322 percent. "Consumer perception and market dynamics" is the second factor encompasses

Table 2. Factor's name and their Eigen values

Factor	Statements	Eigen value	Cronbach Alpha Value	Percentage Variance	Factor Eigen value	Cumulative percentage
Attitudes towards Organic Food	Organic Food is grown by using natural methods	.905	.931	53.322	5.332	53.322
	Organic farming is done through environment friendly manner	.873				
	Organic Food is free from pesticides and chemical fertilizers	.869				
	Organic Food does not contain Artificial Colors, Additives & Flavors	.860				
	Organic Food is nutritious and helps to resist diseases	.855				
	Organic Food is sourced from fields which are certified as	.801				
	Organic by authorized bodies/agencies					
	Organic food is much more expensive than conventionally grown food	.701				
Consumer Perception & Market Dynamics	People choose to eat organic food because they believe it tastes better	.955	.779	21.030	2.103	74.352
	The organic food industry is rapidly growing due to increasing consumer demand	.888				
	Knowledge about organic food through previous experience of purchasing/ consuming/ hearing from others/ reading about it.	.564				

statements related to consumer behavior and market trends regarding organic food. It also demonstrates good reliability with Cronbach's alpha value 0.779. Maximum factor loading of this factor is 0.955 for the item people choose to eat organic food because they believe it tastes better depicts that taste perception is a key driver of consumer behaviour towards organic food. On the other side, minimum factor loading of this factor for the item related to knowledge about organic food through previous experiences of purchasing/ consuming/ hearing from others/ reading about it is 0.564 which indicated a weak association between this aspect and consumers' overall perception. total variance explained by this factor is 21.030 percent which is lower compared to the first factor, highlighting the importance of consumer preferences and market dynamics in shaping organic food consumption patterns.

Overall, the analysis concluded that respondents in the study hold positive attitudes towards organic food, driven by perceptions of its health and environmental benefits. moreover, factors related to consumer perception and market dynamics also play a significant role in influencing consumers' attitude towards organic food consumption. considering and understanding these factors is decisive for stakeholders in organic food industry to effectively target and engage consumer base and its promotion. further research can assist consumer concerns and enhance awareness, thus encouraging sustainable consumption pattern.

The (Table 3) of ANOVA shows the association between demographic variables, specifically location, and the extracted

factors: "Attitudes Towards Organic Food" and "Consumer Perception and Market Dynamics." For the factor "Attitudes Towards Organic Food," the ANOVA results indicate that there is no significant difference in mean scores among respondents from different locations (Faridabad, Gurugram, Panipat, and Sonipat). The F-value of 0.601 and the p-value of 0.615 revealed that respondents' attitude towards organic food does not significantly influence by their location. This implies that regardless of their geographical location within the National Capital Region (NCR) sub-region of Haryana, respondents hold similar attitudes towards organic food based on the factors identified in the analysis. For the factor "Consumer Perception and Market Dynamics," the ANOVA findings show a significant association between location and respondents' perceptions. The F-value of 5.681 and the corresponding p-value of .001 indicate that there are significant differences in mean scores among respondents from different geographical locations. This suggests that location plays a role in shaping consumers' perceptions of market dynamics related to organic food. It can be concluded that location has no significant effect on attitude towards organic food, it does have a prominent impact on consumers' perceptions of market dynamics associated with organic food consumption. Understanding these associations can help to form targeted interventions and marketing strategies to effectively engage consumers across different locations and promote sustainable consumption patterns.

Table 3. ANOVA Analysis

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	Sig.
Attitudes Towards Organic Food	Between Groups	1.812	3	.604	.615
	Within Groups	297.188	296	1.004	
	Total	299.000	299		
Consumer Perception and Market Dynamics	Between Groups	16.277	3	5.426	.001
	Within Groups	282.723	296	.955	
	Total	299.000	299		

DISCUSSION

Consumer attitudes and understanding of organic food in Haryana's National Capital Region (NCR), divides into the intricate interplay of socioeconomic factors and market dynamics determining sustainable consumption patterns. It aims to give significant insights for policymakers, farmers, and industry stakeholders on how to encourage sustainable consumption habits and effectively engage in the organic food market through a comprehensive examination. Found two important elements impacting customer attitudes: "Attitudes Towards Organic Food" and "Consumer Perception and Market Dynamics." These variables highlight the complexities of consumer behavior and the need of recognizing both consumer awareness and market trends while encouraging organic food adoption. Consistent with prior research, our analysis reveals that factors such as health benefits, environmental sustainability, and product quality influence customer preferences for organic food (De Magistris & Gracia, 2008; Hjelmar, 2011; Baudry et al., 2017). Furthermore, the economic viability of organic farming practices, as proved by Chiphang et al., (2022) & Gupta et al., (2015), implies that farmers are increasingly interested in using organic methods. Likewise, the importance of collaboration between agricultural extension services, consumer education initiatives, and industry stakeholders in bridging the gap between farm-level practices and consumer perceptions, as emphasized by Singh et al., (2020). Combining primary and secondary data gives strong insights into consumer behavior and market dynamics connected to organic food consumption by gathering methods such as factor analysis, ANOVA, and reliability testing. These analytical approaches improve the validity and dependability of our findings, resulting in a more accurate knowledge of customer attitudes. In terms of the effects of location on consumer attitudes, discovered that, while geographical location within the NCR sub-region of Haryana had no significant effect on attitudes toward organic food, have an impact on views of market dynamics. This emphasizes the importance of taking into account local context when molding customer behavior and preferences. Finally, our findings add significantly to our understanding of consumer behavior toward organic food in Haryana's NCR region. By identifying critical elements that influence consumer attitudes and perceptions, we provide stakeholders with useful insights into developing focused interventions and marketing strategies to promote sustainable consumption habits and effectively involve consumers in the organic food business.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that consumers in the NCR region showed positive attitude towards organic food, driven by perceptions of its health and environmental benefits. The consumers' awareness plays a significant role in determining the buying pattern for organic food products. If consumers are more aware about organic food it would ultimately lead to increased demand of organic food and thus will change the growing habits of farmers to produce more organic food. Factors such as consumer perception and market dynamics also significantly influence

attitudes towards organic food consumption. Understanding these dynamics is decisive for stakeholders in the organic food industry to effectively engage consumers and promote sustainable consumption patterns.

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