



A STUDY ON CUSTOMER PREFERENCE TOWARDS NATURAL ORGANIC PRODUCTS IN TIRUPUR CITY

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Abstract:

In recent times, the environment has emerged as a hot issue for societies, governments in addition to business organizations. Its significance originates from escalating environmental degradation such as solid wastes; ozone depletion, global warming and air pollution. Organic foods are foods that are produced using methods that do not involve modern synthetic inputs such as synthetic pesticides and chemical fertilizers. Organic foods are also not processed using irradiation, industrial solvent or chemical food additives. It includes introduction of study, statement of problem, objectives of study, limitation of study, Tools, Review of literature, advantages of study and conclusion of study.

Introduction to the Study:

Diet plays an important role in health and disease. The foods we choose to eat can help in the foods that are produced using methods that do not involve modern synthetic inputs such as synthetic pesticides and chemical fertilizers. Organic foods are also not processed using irradiation, industrial solvents or chemical food additives. Prevention of many illnesses, thus increasing our quality of life. In the local supermarket or health food store, there are more food choices than ever before. This can often lead to confusion in determining what food choices are the healthiest. Some people are choosing organically grown foods over conventionally grown foods. The main reasons some choose to consume organically grown foods is the thought that (1) they are consuming little or no pesticide residue left on produce, (2) they want to support an industry that is more gentle and has less negative impacts on the environment (3) they believe organically grown foods have higher levels of nutrients. It is important for individuals to weigh the proposed health benefits and financial cost of consuming organic vs. non-organic foods. Organic foods can include fruits, vegetables, grains, dairy foods, eggs, and to some extent, meats and poultry. Organic foods are defined as those foods that are grown without the use of synthetic fertilizers, sewage sludge, irradiation, genetic engineering, pesticides, or drugs. Pesticides are chemical or control agents made to kill insects, weeds, and fungal pests that damage crops. In large amounts, these have been found to cause different illnesses including cancer. However, organically grown foods do not necessarily mean toxin-free. Plants produce their own natural toxins and these can contaminate organic products, as well as the approved use of natural pesticides, such as sulfur, and copper, which can also be found on the organically grown foods. When talking about animals, organically raised animals are those raised with organic feed and kept free from growth hormones and antibiotics, as well as oftentimes treated more humanely and given better areas to roam than their non-organic counterparts. Organic and natural foods are those produced by natural, without the use of any chemical fertilizers, pesticides or additives. Organic foods were historically grown on small, family-run farms, limiting the sale of these goods to small grocery stores and farmers' markets. Natural foods are now much more popular and widely available, as evidenced by the growing number of natural/organic retailers like Whole Foods Market (WFMI) and Wild Oats Markets (OATS). The sales of organic and natural foods have boomed as well, significantly outpacing the growth of conventional food sales.

Statement of the Problem:

Natural organics food has plenty of advantages when compared to the non-organic food that have been processed with artificial preservatives and chemicals. Settling for these foods for everyday recipes can really assure of health benefits since these are all natural and no harmful effects of pesticide and other chemicals. Environmental awareness, increasing interest of consumers in organic products and the willingness to pay for organic features led to corporate interest in organic marketing, initiating major changes and innovations. To know the customer preference towards natural organic foods the study has been undertaken.

Objectives of the Study:

- ✓ To know the type of natural organic products preferred by the customers.
- ✓ To identify the purchase frequency of organic products.
- ✓ To examine the factors influencing to prefer the organic products.
- ✓ To analyze the customer satisfaction towards organic products

Limitations of the Study:

- ✓ The study is conducted within a particular period of time.
- ✓ The survey has been conducted for 100 respondents only.
- ✓ The findings and suggestions made are not applicable to the universe.

Review of Literature:

Squires and et.al., (2001)¹ in their study, they concluded that the reasons for preferring are organic food products tastes better than conventional produced foods, concerns about health and nutrition, environmental concerns, concerns over the use of chemicals and pesticides in conventional farming, the erosion of confidence in factory and concerns over animal welfare.

Padmanabhan (2005)³ has sort out the health advantages of natural organic foods and organic diets. He has concluded that the respondents' preference is because of the taste and no side effects of organic foods.

Ranjithkumar (2006)⁵ has studied the satisfaction level of respondents towards the natural organic foods. He has studied the reasons to prefer organic food which prevents disease and gives taste. He has recommended to follow healthy diet chart by taking organic food.

V. K. Gupta (2008)⁹ has found that the organic foods are more nutritious or fewer health risk than conventional alternatives. He also said that the increased awareness towards chemical free food, organic and natural products sector will grow significantly in the coming years.

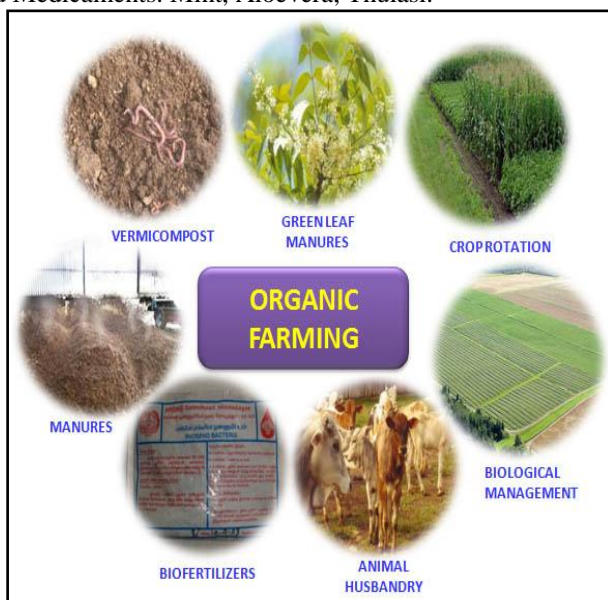
Nik Abdul Rashid (2009)¹⁰, reveals that eco-labels were attractive instruments informing consumers about the environmental impact of their purchasing decisions.

Shaharudin (2010)¹¹ discovered that consumers placed relatively high level of importance on health consciousness and perceived value whereas low level of importance on food safety concern and religious factor in their intention to purchase organic food products.

Nabsiah Abdul Wahid and Rahbar, (2011)¹² supported empirically the assumption that consumers' environmental knowledge or eco-literacy was a significant predictor of environmentally friendly behavior for preferring organic food.

Organic Products Mostly Cultivated in Tirupur Includes the Following:

- ✓ Organic Vegetables: Brinjal, Potato, Tomato, Onion
- ✓ Organic Fruits: Banana, Mango, Papaya, Pomegranate, Guava.
- ✓ Organic Cereals: Wheat, Maize, Corn, Ragi, Bajra.
- ✓ Organic Herbs and Medicaments: Mint, Aloe vera, Thulasi.



Advantages of the Natural Organic Foods:

1. Safer: Natural organic foods are produced without the chemical pesticides and additives commonly used in conventional foods. Advocates of natural foods argue that this makes organic foods safer, which is widely believed by the public. Though this has not been explicitly proven, the belief that organically grown foods pose fewer health risks remains.

2. Better-Taste: A study at Washington State University in 2001 found that organic apples were sweeter and had better texture and firmness than conventionally grown apples. Studies such as these have contributed to the opinion that organic foods are not only healthier, but taste better than traditional foods.

3. Environment Friendly: Organic farms have been shown to use less energy and produce less waste than conventional farms. Also, natural farming doesn't use synthetic pesticides, some of which can harm the environment and wildlife.

4. Farmer Friendly: Farmers who grow crops in the conventional method generally use pesticides, which studies have linked to various health problems ranging from headaches to cancer. Again, this is not a scientific fact, but it is used as another reason to buy organic and natural foods.

Analysis and Interpretation:

Analysis: The term analysis refers to the computation of certain measures along with searching for patterns of relationship that exist among data-groups. Thus, “in the process of analysis, relationships or differences supporting or conflicting with original or new hypotheses should be subjected to statistical tests of significance to determine with what validity data can be said to indicate any conclusions”. This has to be done very carefully, otherwise misleading conclusions may be drawn and the whole purpose of doing research may get vitiated. It is only through interpretation testing studies, if hypotheses are tested and upheld several times, the researcher may arrive at generalization. But in case the researcher had no hypothesis to start with, he would try to explain his findings on the basis of some theory. This may at times result in new questions, leading to further researches. All this analytical information and consequential inferences (s) may well be communicated, preferably through research report, to the consumers of research results who may be either an individual or a group of individuals or some public/private organization.

Interpretation: Interpretation refers of the tasks of drawing inference from the collected facts after an analytical and or experimental study. The task of interpretation has two major aspects viz.

- ✓ The effort to establish continuity through linking the results of a given study with those of another
- ✓ To establish some explanatory concepts.

“In one sense, interpretation concerned with relationships within the collected data, partially overlapping analysis. Interpretation also extends beyond the data of the study to include the results of other research, theory and hypothesis.” Thus, interpretation is the device through which the factors that seem to explain what has been observed by researchers in the course of the study can be better understood and it also provides a theoretical conception which can serve as a guide for further researches.

Satisfaction Level of Eco-Friendly towards Organic Products:

S.No	Factors	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)	Point Analysis
1	Highly Satisfied	32	32	160
2	Satisfied	40	40	160
3	Moderate	14	14	42
4	Dissatisfied	8	8	16
5	Highly Dissatisfied	6	6	6
	Total	100	100	384
	Mean			3.84

The above table shows that, 40% of the respondents are satisfied with the factor eco-friendly, 32% of the respondents are highly satisfied, 14% of the respondents opinion is moderate with eco friendliness of organic products, 8% of the respondents are dissatisfied, 6% of respondents are highly dissatisfied with the factor eco friendly.

Point Analysis:

$$\text{Point Analysis} = \frac{\text{Total Points}}{\text{No. of Respondents}}$$

$$384/100 = 3.84$$

The point obtained is 384 and calculated mean value is 3.84, which is greater than the mean value 3. Hence the respondents are satisfied with the factor eco-friendly.

Rank Analysis:

Factors	I	II	III	IV	V	Total Points	Rank
Quality	45	31	16	2	6	407	1
Freshness	45	29	14	9	3	404	2
Availability	4	8	14	42	32	230	4
Price	2	7	14	26	51	183	5
Taste	4	25	42	21	8	296	3

The above table reveals that out of 100 respondents, the factor quality was assigned as first rank, the freshness was assigned as second rank, taste was assigned as third rank, availability was assigned as fourth rank and price was assigned as fifth rank.

Relationship Between Age and Type of Organic Products Prepared:

Hypothesis: There is no significant difference between age of the respondents and the organic products preferred.

Chi-Square Test: Age and Type of Organic Products Prepared

Age Years	Vegetables	Fruits	Herbs	Medicaments	Honey	Mushroom	Total
Below 20	5	4	1	2	0	0	12
20 - 25	9	3	2	0	4	0	18

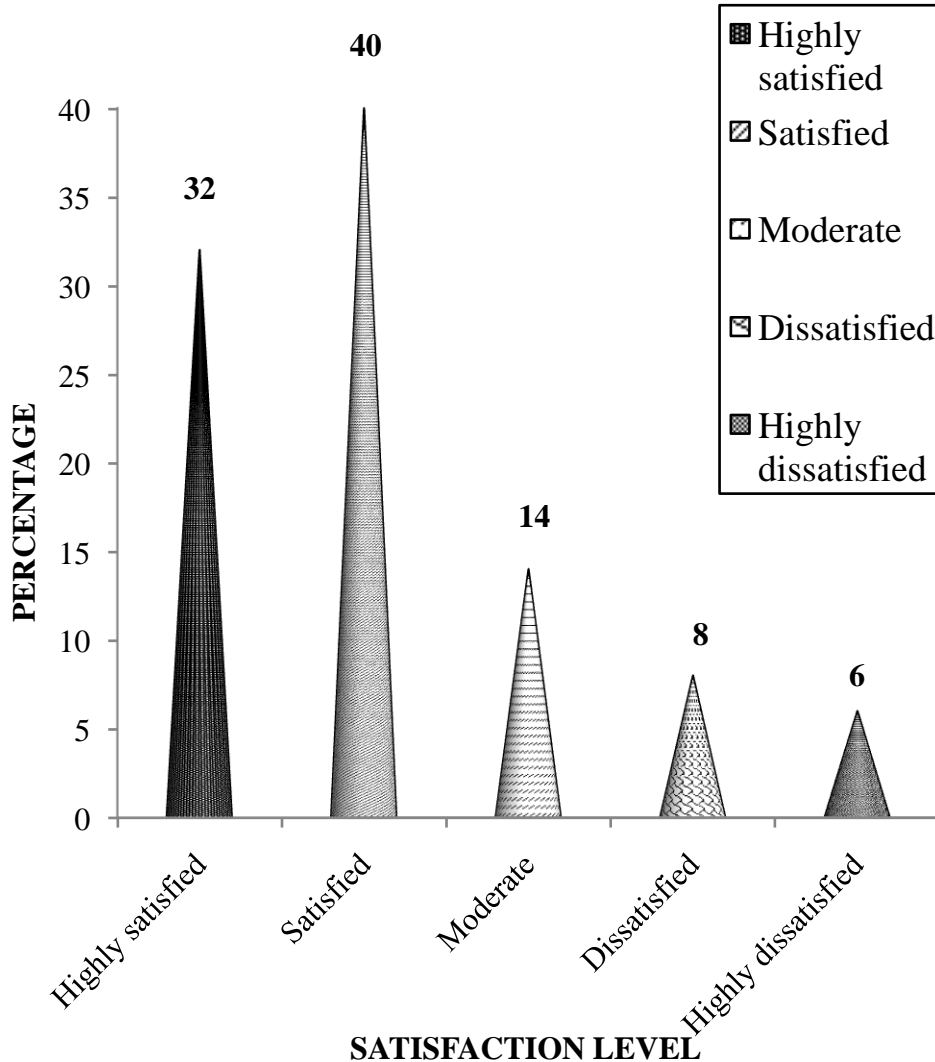
25 - 30	15	2	3	1	2	1	24
Above 30	13	9	2	9	10	3	46
Total	42	18	8	12	16	4	100

Result:

Chi-Square = 21.1, Degrees of Freedom = 15, Probability = 0.132

Chi-Square result showed that there is no significant relationship between age and type of organic products preferred since $p > 0.05 (0.132)$. So the hypothesis is accepted.

Satisfaction Level of Eco-Friendly towards Organic Products:



Relationship Between Income and Type of Organic Products Prepared:

Hypothesis: There is no significant difference between income of the respondents and the organic products preferred.

Chi-Square Test: Income and Type of Organic Products Prepared

Products	Income	Vege Tables	Fruits	Herbs	Medi Caments	Honey	Mush Room	Total
Below 10,000		4	3	2	3	0	0	12
10000 – 15,000		3	6	1	1	1	2	18
15,000 – 20,000		18	5	2	0	1	0	24
Above 20,000		7	4	3	8	14	2	46

Total	42	18	8	12	16	4	100
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Result:

Chi-Square = 42.6, Degrees of Freedom = 15, Probability = 0.000

Chi-Square result showed that there is no significant relationship between income and type of organic products preferred since $p < 0.05 (0.132)$. So the hypothesis is rejected.

Findings, Suggestions and Conclusion:

Findings:

- ✓ 40% of the respondents are satisfied with the factor eco friendliness of natural organic foods.
- ✓ The factor quality was assigned to first rank.
- ✓ Chi-square test showed that there is no significant relationship between age and type of organic product prepared.

Suggestions:

- ✓ Availability of the organic foods should be increased.
- ✓ Some of the respondents felt that price of the natural organic products are high. This should be reduced.
- ✓ The government can provide various loans and other facilities to the organic farmers.
- ✓ Government should arrange for publicity about organic food advantages among the customers.
- ✓ Green manure seeds, bio- fertilizers and bio-pesticides should be made available to the farmers at an affordable price.
- ✓ Consumers should be educated about the advantages of Organic Farming products.

Conclusion:

The analysis shows that perceptions towards organic food product depict the strongest relationship with buyers' intention to buy organic food product followed by the buyers' belief that consuming organic food product is contributing to preserving the environment. It seems that perception towards organic food and belief that organic food is environmentally friendly are not independent from each other. Besides, the availability of product information is also supporting the consumers' intention to purchase organic products. The perception towards organic products, beliefs about product safety for use, belief about product friendliness to the environment and availability of product information are consequently, it is very much important if communication message or educational activities can be initiated at the earlier stage before the consumption behaviour becomes habit. Events such as organic product fairs and shows should be held and showed among young consumers at their early age before they reach the stage of determining their future identity and self values. However, knowledge on organic products as well as action taken by the government either to inform or to create awareness has not reach the satisfactory level in encouraging sustainable purchase with organic products. Therefore, knowing how consumer perceived organic products by understanding the reasons of buying would probably help the marketers of organic products to establish a proper communication and advertising strategies.

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