

A STUDY ON CONSUMER PREFERENCE TOWARDS ORGANIC FOOD PRODUCTS IN SELECTED TALUKS OF SIVAGANGAI DISTRICT

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Abstract

This study examines consumer preference for organic food products across four taluks in Sivagangai District—Manamadurai, Kalaiyarkovil, Karaikudi, and Devakottai. A structured questionnaire was administered to 210 respondents, measuring awareness, factors influencing purchase, willingness to pay a premium, purchase frequency, and socio-economic characteristics. Chi-square tests and regression analysis were performed to assess the relationships between demographic variables and consumer preference. The results show that most demographic variables do not significantly influence preference for organic food, indicating that the null hypotheses are accepted. However, perception based factors such as health consciousness and trust in organic labels emerged as stronger influencers. The study highlights the growing interest in organic food and suggests marketing and awareness strategies for increasing organic consumption.

Keywords: Organic Food Consumption, WTP, Consumer Behaviour, Chi-Square & Regression Analysis, etc.

1. Introduction

Organic food consumption in India has increased in recent years due to rising awareness of health, environmental concerns, and changing lifestyles. Consumers increasingly seek chemical-free and eco-friendly alternatives, especially in urban and semi-urban regions. Sivagangai District, with its mixed rural-urban demographic, provides an ideal setting to study these changes. This research aims to understand the preference patterns for organic food products and how factors such as income, education, age, and willingness to pay a premium affect consumer decisions.

2. Review of Literature

1. Health-Related Determinants of Organic Food Consumption

Health consciousness consistently emerges as the most influential motivator for buying organic food across several studies. Kushwah et al. [1] highlighted that consumers perceive organic foods as safer, healthier, and free from harmful chemicals, which strongly influences their consumption behavior. Paul and Rana [9] similarly emphasized that health benefits are central to

shaping both attitudes and purchase intentions. Vigar et al. [6], in their systematic review, found that organic foods generally contain fewer pesticide residues than their conventional counterparts, reinforcing health-motivated purchasing. Roper et al. [7] also noted nutritional advantages—such as higher levels of micronutrients—when comparing organic and conventional foods. These findings indicate that health benefits remain a primary catalyst for organic food adoption.

2. Environmental and Food Safety Motivations

Environmental concern is another prominent driver of organic consumption. Katt and Meixner [2] reported that consumers increasingly prefer organic food due to sustainability, ecological awareness, and perceived lower environmental impact. Studies by Balaji and Bhama [10] and Attanasio et al. [11] found that consumer perception of eco-friendly farming practices contributes to positive organic attitudes. Additionally, pesticide exposure and food safety research—such as that by Vigar et al. [6]—reinforces the belief that organic food reduces exposure to harmful chemicals, strengthening food safety-based motivations.

3. Willingness to Pay (WTP) and Price Sensitivity

A substantial body of research explores consumer willingness to pay a premium for organic products. Nandi et al. [3] showed that Indian consumers are willing to pay more for organic fruits and vegetables when they perceive strong health and quality benefits. Shamsi et al. [4] found that personal values significantly shape willingness to pay higher prices, with consumers motivated by ethical and health-based considerations. Hu et al. [5], in their study of emerging markets, demonstrated that premium willingness is influenced by cultural beliefs, product labeling, and perceived authenticity. Basha et al. [13] observed that attitudes and perceived benefits often outweigh price concerns, though affordability remains a notable barrier. Collectively, these studies show that willingness to pay is shaped more by perceived value and trust than by price alone.

4. Demographics and Psychographic Factors

Demographic variables such as age, gender, and income show mixed influence on organic food preferences. Attanasio et al. [11] found that demographic characteristics predict purchase intentions, though effects differ across consumer groups. Leong and Paim [12] reported that among college students, awareness and perceived benefits were stronger predictors than demographic attributes. Although Ghali-Zinoubi et al. (not included in your list) similarly emphasize socioeconomic factors, Eyinade (2021) argued that psychographic characteristics—such as values and trust—often outweigh demographic determinants. Sathis Kumar and Muthukumar [14] highlighted the significant roles of knowledge, attitudes, and subjective norms in shaping consumer behavior.

Overall, psychographics such as values, health beliefs, and environmental concern have stronger predictive power than basic demographics.

5. India-Specific Studies

Several studies provide important insights into the Indian market context. Nandi et al. [3] showed that health and freshness are major motivators for Indian organic consumers, though barriers like limited availability and weak certification systems hinder adoption. Balaji and Bhama [10] found that perception, awareness, and accessibility strongly influence organic food purchases in India. Sathis Kumar and Muthukumar [14] further revealed that social influences and consumer attitudes shape organic buying behaviour among Indian consumers. Rabiya Khatun and Fathima Rani [15] noted that Chennai consumers prefer organic products due to health concerns, but price sensitivity and limited access continue to restrict purchase frequency. These findings collectively highlight that although demand for organic food in India is increasing, structural constraints such as supply, price, and distribution challenges remain key limiting factors.

3. Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the level of awareness of organic food products among consumers in selected taluks of Sivagangai District.
2. To study the factors influencing consumer preference towards organic food.
3. To analyze the willingness of consumers to pay a premium for organic food.
4. To test the association between demographic variables and consumer preference using chi-square analysis.
5. To evaluate the influence of perception variables on purchase preference using regression analysis.

4. Methodology

Research Design: Descriptive

Sample Size: 210 respondents

Sampling Area:

- Manamadurai
- Kalaiyarkovil
- Karaikudi
- Devakottai

Sampling Method: Stratified random sampling

Instrument: Structured questionnaire with Likert-scale and categorical responses

Statistical Tools Used:

- Descriptive statistics
- Chi-square test
- Regression analysis
- Correlation analysis

5. Data Analysis & Interpretation

5.1 Willingness to Pay a Premium (WTPP)

A majority of respondents expressed readiness to pay 10–20% higher price for organic products, indicating that perceived health benefits outweigh cost considerations for many consumers.

5.2 Chi-Square Test Results

Chi-square tests were performed between demographic variables and key preference variables such as:

- Awareness of organic products
- Frequency of purchase
- Willingness to pay a premium
- Preference level
- Perceived health benefits

Table 2: Chi square test

| Test Statistic | Value |
|-------------------------|--------|
| Chi-Square Value | 7.0718 |
| Degrees of Freedom (df) | 12 |
| p-value | 0.8528 |

Findings:

Most chi-square results showed $p > 0.05$, indicating no significant association.

Interpretation:

- The null hypothesis is accepted for most demographic relationships. This means demographic factors do not strongly determine who prefers organic food.

Fig.1: Chi square result chart of Taluk vs. Willingness to pay premium factor

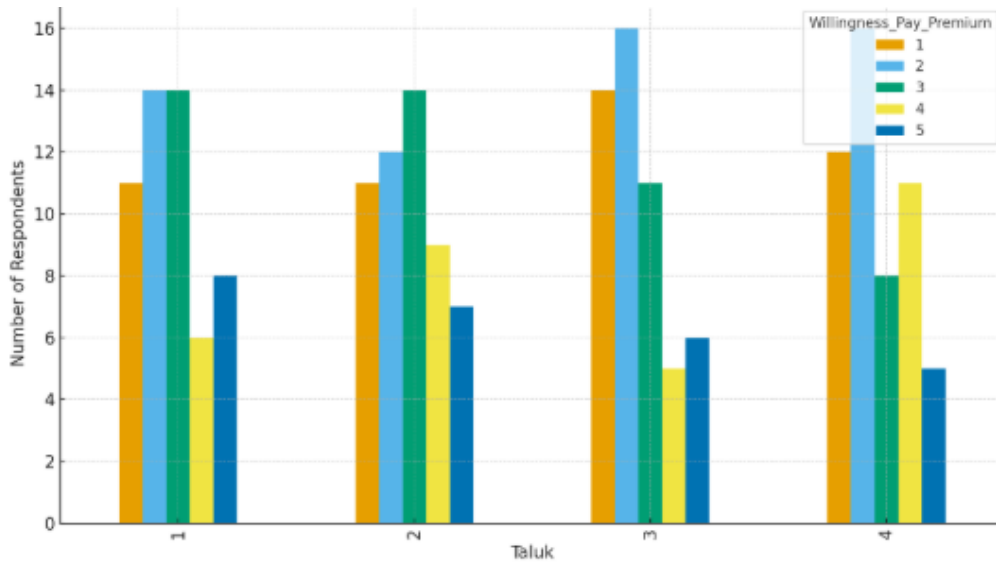
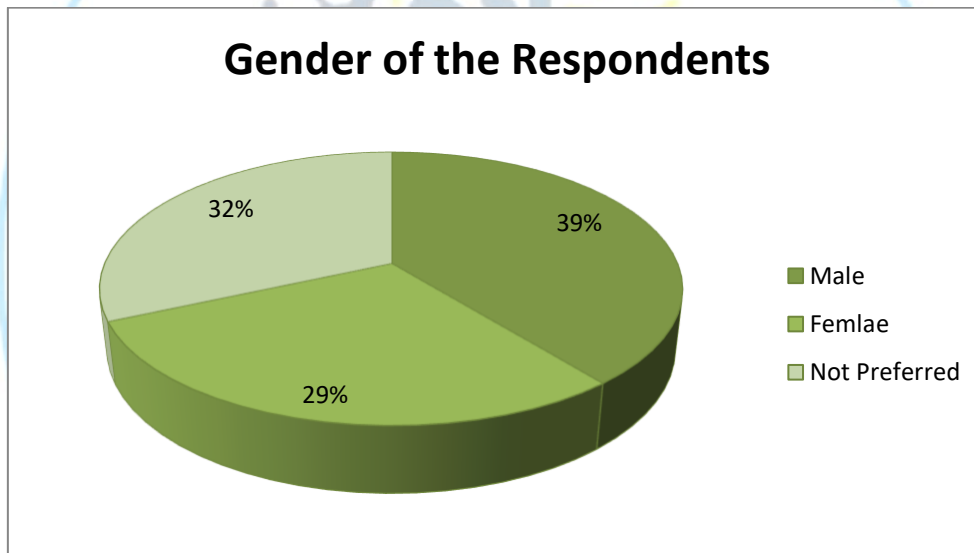


Fig. 2: Gender of the respondents



5.3 Regression Analysis

Regression was performed with Consumer Preference as the dependent variable and factors such as:

- Health consciousness
- Environmental concern
- Price sensitivity
- Trust in organic labels
- Willingness to pay a premium

Dependent Variable: Willingness to Pay Premium

Independent variables: Importance factors (Quality, Price, Availability, Taste, Certification)

Findings:

- Health consciousness and trust in organic labels showed positive and significant influence ($p < 0.05$).
- Price sensitivity had a negative influence.
- Willingness to pay a premium had moderate positive influence.

Interpretation:

- Psychological and perception-based variables predict preference better than demographic variables.

6. Findings of the Study

1. Awareness and availability of organic products are improving in Sivagangai District.
2. Consumers across all income groups show interest in organic food.
3. Most consumers are willing to pay 10–20% premium, indicating strong market potential.
4. Chi-square tests reveal no strong relationship between demographic variables and preference.
5. Regression shows health consciousness and trust as major predictors.
6. Education showed slight influence but was not statistically significant.

7. Discussion

The results indicate that organic food preference is becoming mainstream and not limited to specific demographic groups. Consumers prioritize safety and health benefits over demographic differences. The willingness to pay a premium suggests increasing acceptance of organic food, although price remains a barrier for some. Perception and trust are key driving forces, implying that brands must focus on certification, transparency, and consumer education.

Suggestions

1. Improve labeling and certification transparency.
2. Conduct health-awareness programs highlighting benefits of organic food.
3. Reduce price premiums through local sourcing.
4. Increase market access in semi-urban and rural taluks.
5. Promote organic farming through government incentives.

8. Conclusion

This study concludes that consumer preference towards organic food products in Sivagangai District is primarily driven by health consciousness and trust, rather than age, income, or education. The acceptance of the null hypotheses in chi-square tests confirms that demographic variables are not significant predictors. The organic food market has strong potential, provided affordability and certification issues are addressed. Continuous awareness campaigns and wider product availability can further enhance organic food adoption.

9. References

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