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A STUDY ON ANALYSIS OF DETERMINANTS OF CONSUMER'S BUYING BEHAVIOUR OF ORGANIC FOOD PRODUCTS WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO SAHARANPUR CITY OF WESTERN UTTAR PRADESH

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ABSTRACT
Consumer behavior has been mainly influenced by increasing worries about health and environmental sustainability, particularly in cities like Saharanpur in Western Uttar Pradesh. This study aims to explore the main factors that affect consumers' decisions to buy organic food products. It examines reasons and challenges related to choosing organic options by looking at health awareness, environmental concerns, product availability, trust in certifications, and socio-demographics. Researchers collected primary data from various age and economic groups in Saharanpur through structured questionnaires. The findings show that high costs and lack of access are significant barriers. Meanwhile, health benefits and trust in products serve as strong motivators. Policymakers, manufacturers, and marketers can draw on these findings to better meet consumer needs. The local study highlights the opportunity for sustainable food consumption in growing urban markets and provides valuable insights into behavioral patterns in Tier-II cities.

INTRODUCTION

Consumer behavior has clearly changed in recent years. This shift is driven by a desire for better lifestyles and eco-friendly choices, especially in food consumption. Organic foods, which are made without synthetic fertilizers, pesticides, or genetically modified organisms, have gained popularity because of their health benefits and low environmental impact. This trend is starting to show even in semi-urban areas like Saharanpur in West Uttar Pradesh. Saharanpur offers a unique view into changing food consumption patterns due to its mix of rural agriculture and growing urban life. People in this area are increasingly interested in organic products, influenced by lifestyle changes, health awareness, and rising incomes. Several factors contribute to this change, including personal attitudes, knowledge, product availability, pricing, trust in certifications, and socioeconomic status.

Knowing how Saharanpur customers buy organic products is important. It helps fill the gap between producers and consumers. Such insights also highlight the challenges of promoting organic food products in smaller cities. Despite the growing interest, many obstacles remain, including limited market reach, misleading labels, and high prices.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Consumer behavior has changed these days because of the shift toward healthier lifestyles and eco-friendly consumption, especially towards food products. Organic foods have gained attention due to their health benefits and minimal environmental impact. These products are made without synthetic fertilizers, pesticides, or genetically modified organisms, appealing to many people, even in semi-urban areas like Saharanpur in West Uttar Pradesh.

With rising health consciousness and environmental concerns, research over the past decade has focused on how consumers buy organic food. Preferring to eat organic is often seen as a lifestyle choice motivated by several connected factors. Researchers have looked into these influences from social, economic, and psychological point of view.

Health consciousness is one of the strongest motivators for eating organic food. Magnusson et al. (2003) found that people who are health-conscious tend to choose foods without artificial chemicals. Likewise, Grunert and Juhl (1995) found that customers select healthier options because they see organic food products as safer and better for their health. Environmental awareness also plays a vital role in the consumption of organic products. Consumers who recognize the harmful environmental impact of traditional farming prefer to consume organic food products. Schifferstein and

Oude Ophuis (1998) noted that environmentally conscious customers are more inclined to buy organic foods to support ecological sustainability.

Consumer trust in organic foods is mainly influenced by certification. In countries like India, many customers are skeptical due to the lack of strong regulations. Research by Yadav and Pathak (2016) shows that people's trust in organic certifying bodies and labels greatly influences their purchasing decisions towards organic food products. If customers believe the certification process is genuine, they are more likely to pay a premium for organic products.
Socio-demographic factors, including age, occupation, income, and education, also affect buying habits of the consumers. For example, Chakrabarti (2010) found that younger consumers with higher income and education levels tend to buy more organic food. Regional and cultural differences further contribute to the variation in consumer behavior across India's diverse socioeconomic landscape.

Affordability and availability are often observed as obstacles to consuming organic food products. Padel and Foster (2005) reported that although the organic food products market is growing, middle and lower-income consumers face challenges due to higher prices and limited availability. This situation is especially true in smaller cities where the organic food products market is still in the phase of development.

There is limited research on consumer buying behavior regarding the organic food products in Saharanpur. Most of the studies have focused on larger metro cities, leaving a gap in understanding behavior in Tier-II cities. This study aims to fulfill that gap by providing insights into the specific motivators and challenges faced by the customers in Saharanpur, enhancing our understanding of the Indian organic food products market.

Health Consciousness and Perceived Benefits
One of the main reasons people prefers organic food products are health awareness. According to Lockie et al. (2002), consumers generally connect organic food products to better health benefits. These benefits include no harmful chemicals, improved nutritional value, and greater food safety. Singh and Verma (2017) also point out that people living in cities and semi-urban areas in India are increasingly considering organic food products as a way to prevent health issues among the consumers. Misra et al. (2012) found that consumers who pick healthier foods are more likely to also buy organic products because they believe these are free from chemical residues and pesticides. These beliefs largely shape positive feelings about eating organic food products.

Environmental Awareness and Ethical Concerns
Another important motivator is concern for the environment. Consumers who are sensitive about ecology often connect their food preferences to broader issues like sustainability, loss of biodiversity, and climate change. Pro-environmental values positively influence the consumption of organic food products products, especially among educated consumers (Aertsens et al., 2009). For example, research done in India by Narayanan (2005) shows that rural consumers are becoming more aware of the long-term negative effects of chemical farming. As a result, they are more likely to support organic agriculture as both buyers and community members. Furthermore, while more common in urban and foreign markets, concerns about fair trade and animal welfare have started to affect consumer preferences.

Trust, Certification, and Product Authenticity
When buying organic food products, trust is a key factor. Trust in labels, brands, and certifications are essential in countries like India, where laws and monitoring are still evolving. Research by Yadav and Pathak (2016) shows that customers are more likely to buy organic food products if they view certification as reliable and clear. Misra and Singh (2015) note that people, especially first-time buyers, often feel confused by inconsistent standards and unregulated claims. In Tier-II cities like Saharanpur, strong branding and independent labels such as Jaivik Bharat or India Organic can enhance consumer confidence.

Socio-Demographic Factors
Many studies have tried to understand how socio-demographic traits affect organic food products consumption. Key factors include household size, employment, income, education, and age. According to Chakrabarti (2010), younger and more educated consumers tend to be more adventurous and health-conscious, making them more open to organic food. Similarly, Singh and Verma (2017) discovered that organic food products consumption is positively linked to income level, even though organic food products usually cost more than conventional food. This is especially the case

in semi-urban areas like Saharanpur, where disposable incomes influence both purchasing power and the willingness to spend more on organic products.

Availability, Accessibility, and Price Sensitivity

Unavailability at high pricing is one of the most often mentioned barriers to the growth of the organic food products sector. Padel and Foster (2005) pointed out that supply bottlenecks and a lack of retail outlets hinder accessibility even in highly developed nations. Outside of major cities, this is less common in India. According to Singh and Singh (2018), semi-urban customers have limited access to a variety of certified organic items because organic product retail and distribution chains are concentrated in urban areas. Poor retailer awareness and inconsistent supplies also contribute to weak market development in areas like Western Uttar Pradesh.

Psychological and Behavioural Aspects

Organic food products buying habits have also been studied using behavioral models like the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991). Research by Thøgersen (2007) and Arvola et al. (2008) shows that attitudes, perceived behavioral control, and social norms strongly affect consumers' intentions to buy organic food. Indian studies, such as those by Rana and Paul (2017), use these models to conclude that positive feelings alone are not enough to guarantee purchases. They must be paired with affordability and convenience.

Cultural and Regional Influences

Food preferences are shaped by culture. In India, customs, religion, and regional culture play a big role in eating habits. There are differences in the consumption of organic food products across regions. In North India, organic dairy and grain products have gained popularity among consumers because of Ayurvedic beliefs and religious practices, according to research by Ali and Kapoor (2009). This shows that, especially in areas like Saharanpur with strong traditions, cultural acceptance could be an overlooked but key factor in choosing organic food.

Gaps in Literature and Relevance to Saharanpur

While previous research gives a basic understanding of organic food products consumption, most of it focuses on industrialized economies and urban areas. In Tier-II cities like Saharanpur, where awareness, access, and wealth levels vary widely, there is a lack of literature. To build an inclusive market, it is important to understand the behavioral trends in these regions. By concentrating on Saharanpur and looking at the local factors that affect customer choices, this study addresses this gap.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

1. The aim of this study is to look at the main factors that affect consumers' choices to buy organic food products in Saharanpur, a growing city in Western Uttar Pradesh. The methods used are designed to make sure the data collected is trustworthy, pertinent, and helpful for the study's goals.
2. **Sampling Unit**
   Individual residents of Saharanpur, who are current or potential buyers of organic food products, were the sampling units for this study. Preference was given to customers who were aware of organic items and had previously made or thought about such purchases.
3. **Sampling Technique**
   For the investigation, a non-probability sampling technique known as purposeful sampling was used. This method helped find responders who were well-informed about organic food products items and could provide valuable answers. It made it easier to select a relevant group that aligns with the study's goals.
4. **Sample Size**
   Sixty respondents made up the sample size for this study. To ensure diversity and representation in Saharanpur city, they were chosen from different age groups, income levels, educational backgrounds, and jobs.
5. **Data Collection Procedure**
   To reach more people and make it easier for them to respond, we collected primary data both offline, in person, and online, using Google Forms. The questionnaire was completed within two weeks. We explained the study's goal to the participants and assured them that their responses would remain private.

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Research Instrument

The study instrument was a standardized questionnaire. It included sections on socio-demographic information, attitudes and knowledge about organic food, and several factors that influence consumer behavior, such as price, availability, trust, environmental concern, and health consciousness. 5 point Likert scale & multiple-choice questions were used to collect responses.

Data Analysis

Responses were tagged and entered into Microsoft Excel after collecting data. To identify the main trends and behavior patterns, we used descriptive statistical tools like percentages, mean scores, and cross-tabulation. We also created tables and graphs to present the results clearly and systematically. This approach gives a structured way to understand consumer behavior regarding organic food products in a semi-urban area. It is also a helpful guide for researchers, marketers, and lawmakers.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The general results of the survey given to sixty residents of Saharanpur who consume organic food products are shown in the next section. We start with the profile of the respondents. Then, we present descriptive statistics of key behavior constructs and their relationships.

1. Demographic Profile of Respondents

Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Female	34	56.7
	Male	26	43.3
Age Group	21–30	24	40.0
	31–40	15	25.0
	41–50	18	30.0
	51 and above	3	5.0
Marital Status	Married	48	80.0
	Single	12	20.0
Education Level	Postgraduate	45	75.0
	Graduate	10	16.7
	Doctorate	5	8.3
Occupation	Salaried	30	50.0
	Self-Employed	15	25.0
	Student	10	16.7
	Other	5	8.3
Monthly Household Income	< 20,000 INR	10	16.7
	20,001–40,000 INR	20	33.3
	40,001–60,000 INR	8	13.3
	60,001–80,000 INR	12	20.0
	> 80,000 INR	10	16.7
Residence Area	Urban	36	60.0
	Semi-urban	21	35.0
	Rural	3	5.0
Frequency of Purchase	Always	7	11.7
	Often	30	50.0
	Sometimes	12	20.0
	Rarely	6	10.0
	Never	5	8.3
Main Place of Purchase	Local Market	30	50.0
	Supermarket	12	20.0
	Organic Store	9	15.0
	Online	6	10.0
	Farmer's Market	3	5.0

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Reason for Choosing Organic (multi-response)	Health	60	100.0
	Environment	48	80.0
	Taste	45	75.0
	Quality	54	90.0
	Recommendation	30	50.0

2. Descriptive Statistics of Key Constructs: We grouped the 60 Likert-scale statements into six constructs. Table 2 reports each construct's mean score (1=strongly disagree, 5=strongly agree) and variability.

Construct	No. of Items	Mean Score	Standard Deviation
Health & Nutrition Perception	5	4.62	0.35
Trust	6	3.88	0.48
Environmental Concern	3	4.31	0.42
Satisfaction & Experience	5	4.20	0.50
Purchase Intention & Loyalty	6	4.42	0.47
Social Influence & Word-of-Mouth	5	4.10	0.55

3. Inter-Relationships among Constructs

Table 3 shows Pearson correlations. Strong positive links emerge between health perception, environmental concern, and purchase intention.

	Health	Trust	Environment	Satisfaction	Intention	Social Influence
Health & Nutrition	1.00	0.48	0.52	0.50	0.65	0.58
Trust	0.48	1.00	0.45	0.42	0.55	0.50
Environmental Concern	0.52	0.45	1.00	0.48	0.60	0.56
Satisfaction & Experience	0.50	0.42	0.48	1.00	0.62	0.58
Purchase Intention	0.65	0.55	0.60	0.62	1.00	0.70
Social Influence	0.58	0.50	0.56	0.58	0.70	1.00

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Emphasize Health Benefits**
  - Highlight scientific evidence on nutrition and safety.
  - Use clear on-pack claims and in-store signage.
- **Build and Communicate Trust**
  - Use recognized certification logos in advertising.
  - Partner with local NGOs or government bodies for endorsement.
- **Promote Environmental Message**
  - Share stories about sustainable farming practices in Saharanpur.
  - Include eco-friendly packaging cues.
- **Improve Shopping Satisfaction**
  - Expand organic options in local markets.
  - Improve packaging design for freshness and convenience.
- **Strengthen Social Influence**
  - Encourage user-generated content on social media.
  - Launch referral programs to reward word-of-mouth.
- **Pricing and Accessibility**
  - Offer bundle pricing or loyalty discounts.
  - Ensure wider distribution through e-commerce and farmers' markets.

CONCLUSION

Consumers in Saharanpur consider health and nutrition the main reasons to buy organic food. Environmental concerns and overall satisfaction are also important. There is an opportunity to build credibility since trust in certifications and providers are moderate. Positive word-of-mouth greatly influences people's willingness to buy and their loyalty.

Marketers and lawmakers can boost the adoption of organic food products in this area by effectively promoting health and sustainability messages, fostering trust, and enhancing the shopping experience.

Limitations

• Representativeness of the Sample: The study's findings may not apply to the larger population of Western Uttar Pradesh or other areas because it was based on a targeted sample of 60 organic food products users in Saharanpur.
• The Cross-Sectional Design: Since the data were collected at one time, it was not possible to see how attitudes and behaviors change or to determine the causes of certain factors.
• Bias in Self-Reporting: Because the measures relied on self-reporting, there could be social desirability and recall biases present.
• Establish a Scope Constraint: Other relevant factors, such as price sensitivity, cultural values, or marketing messages, were not considered, even though the main influences on health perception, trust, and concern for the environment were examined.
• Channel Homogeneity: Newer channels, such as direct-to-consumer subscription models and farm-to-home deliveries, were not well represented in the analysis, which mostly focused on traditional purchasing channels like farm markets and organic shops.

Future Research Directions

• Increase Geographic Coverage: To compare patterns between regions and improve generalizability, repeat the study in several cities and rural communities in Uttar Pradesh.
• Tracking Longitudinally: To observe how consumer behavior changes over time, especially in response to market developments or regulatory changes, use panel designs.
• Incorporate Qualitative Perspectives: To uncover deeper reasons, challenges, and decision-making processes that surveys can miss, hold focus groups or interviews.
• Perceptions of Value and Price: Include metrics for perceived value, affordability, and willingness to pay more to reflect consumer trade-offs.
• Evaluate Marketing Strategies: Create and evaluate field experiments to measure their impact on word-of-mouth and purchase frequency. This could involve emphasizing certification labels, taste tests, or loyalty programs.
• Comparing Cultures: To identify universal drivers and local nuances, compare Saharanpur's consumer behavior with that of other cultures, such as urban versus tribal communities.
• Adoption of Technology: Examine how social-commerce trends, mobile apps, and online platforms influence awareness, trust-building, and purchasing intentions for organic foods.

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