



(REVIEW ARTICLE)



# Consumers' buying behavior towards organic food products: A review of the literature

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## Abstract

Organic food products have gained a significant place in the minds of consumers. Everyone is worried about their health and relies on products that are produced, stored, and processed without the use of any chemical residues or artificial fertilisers. The paper discusses customers' attitude and intentions that affect consumer buying behavior towards organics food products. These findings are extracted from various research conducted around the globe and factors are analyzed, and recommendations are provided for future research. The objective of this research is to find out the main factors that influence consumers' attitude and intention to purchase organic food products. The positive change in consumer attitude is due to demographic changes such as rising income and education of modern consumers. With increasing emphasis on the environment, consumers are paying attention to the green aspect of products. Health-related issues are quickly becoming a priority for consumers when purchasing products. Moreover, changing food consumption patterns of consumers is emerging as one of the biggest threats to leading a healthy life. Increased use of fertilizers and chemicals harms the environment and human health. Factors such as customers' knowledge, health consciousness, environment consciousness, personal norms, subjective norms, packaging labels, availability, and prices are considered to be the main reasons behind purchasing or consuming organic food products. The future of organic products depends on demand from consumers, so a consumer-focused approach to understanding the organic food products market is necessary.

**Keywords:** Organic Food Products; Consumers' Demographic Factors; Influencing Factors; Willing to Pay; Availability; Packaging Label

## 1. Introduction

General awareness of organic food products is increasing among society. Furthermore, consumer attitudes towards purchasing organic food are positive (Priya. S and Parameswari. M ,2016). Awareness of organic products is increasing globally in response to concerns regarding farming methods, food safety, animal welfare, human health, and environmental concerns. Food and agriculture industry experts agree that the organic food trend has not yet reached its peak, and there is still a lot of global development potential in the organic food market (Singh, A. and Verma, P.,2017).

Farmers and marketers promote organic food products as healthy and environmentally friendly products, which are different from the promotion efforts associated with non-organic food products (Wang, J., Pham, T.L. and Dang, V.T. ,2020). They argued that they had to adapt successful industry practices to promote a healthy change in consumers' eating habits that will help companies that produce such healthy products prosper. To do this, marketers need to know the potential consumers to whom they can promote organic foods. Additionally, they want to know what factors will

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influence the purchasing decisions of these consumers. To identify and target organic food consumers, it is important to understand what influences their attitude and behavioral intention towards purchasing organic food products. Therefore, this study focuses on consumer buying behavior towards organic foods products.

## *OBJECTIVES*

There are four objectives on this study.

- To identify factors affecting on consumers' attitudes and purchase intention towards Organic Food Products.
- To understand the impact of demographic factors on organic food consumption.
- To analyse consumer buying behaviour towards organic food products.
- To develop a conceptual framework for future research.

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## **2. Review of related literature**

### **2.1. Consumers attitude towards organic food products**

Dangi, N., Gupta, S. K., and Narula, S. A. (2020) concluded that the consumer has a more desirable attitude towards behavior, then a person tends to behave in harmony with thoughtful behavior. Honkanen et al. (2006) conducted a study of moral standards and motives influencing selection of organic products.

### **2.2. Attitudinal influences on purchase intention**

Ajzen, I. (1985) concluded that organic consumption is correlated with purchase intent along with (perceived) behavioral control. In turn, intentions are motivated by attitudes (subjective and personal), (perceived) behavioral control and subjective norms. Hidalgo-Baz, M., Martos-Partal, M., and González-Benito, Ó. (2017) concluded that a person's attitude and subjective norm of behavior will influence their intention to perform the behavior.

### **2.3. Demographic factors (gender, age, education, income)**

#### *2.3.1. Gender*

Many studies have taken into account demographic factors to understand consumer behavior. Solomon, M., Bamossy, G., Askegaard, S., and Hogg, M. K. (2006) found that organic food buyers are more likely to be young. Werner, J., and Alvensleben, R.V. (2011) concluded that women seem to be more interested and have more positive attitudes and they also buy regularly. Further Janssen, M. (2018) founded that, in general, women are highly concerned about their health and are concerned about healthy eating habits.

#### *2.3.2. Age*

Some studies have shown that age has a significant relationship with organic food consumption, and also positively correlates with consumer attitudes and motives. Quah, S. H., and Tan, A. K. (2009) also found that young consumers buy because of environmental factors, while the old consumers buy to take care of their health. Further Hempel, C., and Hamm, U. (2016) found that older consumers are much more serious.

#### *2.3.3. Education*

Janssen, M. (2018) demonstrated that the strong correlation between increased consumption organic food with levels of formal education has been seen in research. Liang, A. R.-D., and Lim, W.-M. (2020) stated that the level of education of consumers is especially important.

#### *2.3.4. Income*

Van Doorn, J., and Verhoef, P. C. (2011) studied that the level of income directly affects the purchase by the consumer, the desire to produce organically produced food, and in turn, the size of the household affects the level of income.

## **2.4. Factors influencing towards organic food products**

### *2.4.1. Customer knowledge*

Baron, R. M., and Kenny, D. A. (1986) concluded that consumer knowledge is one step ahead of consumer consciousness. It's a degree of consumer understanding of product features, properties, benefits, etc. Steptoe, A., Pollard, T. M., and Wardle, J. (1995) argued that the more knowledge consumers have about organic products, the more positive their attitude.

### *2.4.2. Health consciousness*

According to Tandon, A., Dhir, A., Kaur, P., Kushwah, S., and Salo, J. (2020a), health consciousness can be defined as the degree to which people value health in daily activities. When buying food, consumers usually think about health as an important factor and show interest in issues related to food and health. Mohamed, M.A., Chimes, A. and Shelby, A.A. (2012) stated that consumers concerned about their health problems have more intentions to buy organic products.

### *2.4.3. Environment consciousness*

Meachum et al., (2017) stated that environment consciousness means the level at which people are aware of problems with respect for the environment and contribute to efforts to resolve them or show a willingness to be directly involved in their resolution. Liu, C., and Zheng, Y. (2019) concluded that concern for the environment affects consumer attitudes and intention to buy organic products.

### *2.4.4. Personal Norms*

Van Doorn, J., and Verhoef, P. C. (2015) suggested that the individual's own values and ideals play an important role in shaping the structure predict attitude and his intentions. Tandon, A., Dhir, A., Kaur, P., Kushwaha, S., and Salo, J. (2020b) concluded that individuals purchase products that suit each individual values, standards, identity and social status. In this direction, it is possible that having positive personal norms influences self-identification with OFP.

### *2.4.5. Subjective Norms*

Rana, J., and Paul, J. (2017) concluded that subjective norms defined as social pressure on an individual to become involved or submit to a group behavior such as family and friends. These norms are normative beliefs and expectations of groups or important referents from this person.

### *2.4.6. Price or willing to pay*

Jumba, F.R., Freyer, B., Mwine, J. and Dietrich, P. (2012) concluded that the price of a product can predict future demand for the product and influence the success of the product. (Hawken, 1993) Michelsen et al (2000) reported that countries with the largest market share organic products, which make up a high percentage of products through supermarkets are likely to have a lower consumer price markup.

### *2.4.7. Availability*

Vehari, S. and Doli Canin, E. (2016), concluded that availability to purchase remains a barrier on purchase intention towards organic food products in previous studies, it has been identified as a major influence for not buying organic food.

### *2.4.8. Packaging Label*

Amos, C., Penina, I., Hawkins, T.G. and Davis, N. (2014), suggested that the function of organic labeling is to provide information on environmental protection and health. Krishna, V., Pascual, U. and Zilberman, D. (2010), concluded that consumer confidence, awareness of organic labeling directly influences intentions to purchase organic food.

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## **3. Methodology**

In order to review the empirical literature, information was obtained compiled from various research articles published in referred Journals. A review of the literature was carried out in order to investigate consumers' attitudes and purchase intentions towards organic food products. In this research, a study and analysis of the conceptual framework and empirical literature were conducted to determine the relationship between factors influencing consumer attitude and intention to purchase organic food products.

#### 4. Theoretical framework of the study

After reviewing the existing literature, various significant influencing factors have been revealed, and based on these influencing factors, a framework can be established for evaluating consumer demand for organic food. This framework represents the relationship between factors affecting consumers' attitude and intention towards organic food products.

The influencing factors that affect the behavior of consumers buying organic food can be clearly seen in the figure below.

##### 4.1. Conceptual Framework of the Study

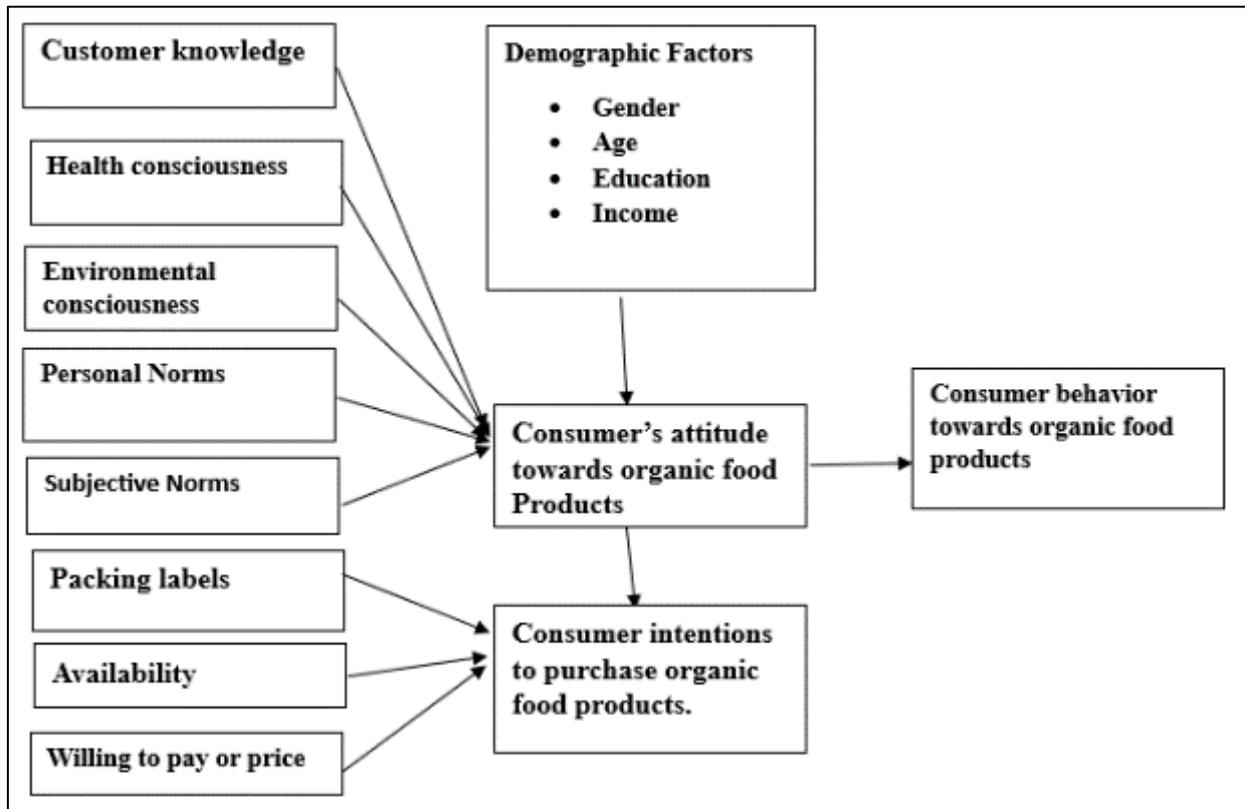


Figure 1 Own complication

#### 5. Findings

A literature reviewed in the above segment suggests that attitudes and purchase intention of consumers towards buying organic food products depends on influencing factors like customer knowledge, health consciousness, environmental consciousness, personal norms, subjective norms, packaging labels, availability, price or willingness to pay with demographic factors such as age, gender, education and income. Both influencing factors and demographic factors have impact on consumers' attitudes and purchase intention towards organic food products.

The influencing factors such as customer knowledge, health consciousness, environmental consciousness, personal norms, subjective norms have a positive attitude towards organic food products. One of the most important influencing factors on the consumer buying behavior of organic food products is their health consciousness. It has been observed that health-conscious customers are more likely to have a positive attitude and intention towards organic foods products. Another factor that contributes to establishing a positive attitude and intention towards organic foods is environmental awareness. Customers with more concern for the environment and sustainability showed more interest in purchasing organic food products.

Many research have pointed out that three of the obstacles faced by organic food products is the lack of trust on willingness to pay, packaging labels and availability for organic food products. Prices or willingness to pay is an important factor in buying organic food products. It was found that when they purchase food and consider organic foods

more expensive than conventional foods. Willingness to pay has impacted positive and negative impacts on customers' purchase intention towards organic food products when they decide to buy organic food products. Some research suggested that limited availability of organic foods in the market reduces the purchase customers' intentions.

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## 6. Conclusion and suggestions

Nowadays, the demand for organic food products in the market is increasing day by day. Consumers' apprehension towards health and the harmful effects of chemicals forces them to consume organic products. The overall awareness about organic food products among the public is increasing and their attitude towards purchase intention is positive. It can be clearly observed that non-demographic factors such as health consciousness, environmentally friendly concerns, personal and subjective norms directly influence consumers' attitude towards organic food products. The results of the study further show that the reasons consumers advocate for purchasing organic food products are varied, and the motivations behind their purchasing decisions mainly include concerns about the above-mentioned influencing factors.

Many research has indicated that three of the obstacles faced by organic food products are lack of confidence in willingness to pay, packaging labels, and availability of organic food products. Consumer behavior includes the psychological processes that consumers go through in recognizing needs and finding ways to solve these needs; collect and interpret information; developing plans, executing these plans, making purchasing decisions and post-purchase behavior. Consumer behavior is key to society's impact on the environment. Consumer behavior is changing towards purchasing many environmentally friendly and organic products, due to awareness of environmental degradation and the related issues. Marketers should attract consumers to buy organic food by posting ads on social media such as Facebook, newspapers and magazines, in addition to involving health professionals to promote motivation to consume organic foods. Policy makers should pay attention to enhancing public awareness through various media programs.

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## Compliance with ethical standards

### *Disclosure of conflict of interest*

No conflict of interest to be disclosed.

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