

CUSTOMER PERCEPTION TOWARDS ORGANIC PRODUCTS AND ITS ATTRIBUTES IN SOUTHERN DISTRICTS OF TAMIL NADU

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ABSTRACT

The term 'organic' has been widely used over the past decade due to its enormous need. Organic products of various kinds have started flooding the market owing to the health conscious attitude of the prospective customers. There has been a steady uptick in the production, marketing and consumption of organic products due to its growing popularity. Government measures supporting the organic farmers can also be attributed for its tremendous growth. Along with the traditional form of marketing, organic producers have now started to tap the online platforms, social media to reach a wider audience and that has also been helpful in the growth and expansion of the organic market. The far southern districts of Tamil Nadu have been growing steadily in terms of infrastructural development, employment generation due to the various development schemes of the Government. With gradual growth, their wants and desires too have changed and the present study has been set to explore the customer perception towards organic products and its attributed in the southern districts of Tamil Nadu. A sample of 640 respondents was contacted for the study based on purposive sampling. A well constructed questionnaire was administered among them soliciting the required data. The respondents were purposively selected from the far southern districts of Tamil Nadu namely: Tirunelveli, Tuticorin, Kanyakumari and Tenkasi.

Keywords: perception, organic products, eco-friendly.

INTRODUCTION

The term 'organic' has been widely used over the past decade due to its enormous need. Organic products of various kinds have started flooding the market owing to the health conscious attitude of the prospective customers. There has been a steady uptick in the production, marketing and consumption of organic products due to its growing popularity. Government measures supporting the organic farmers can also be attributed for its tremendous growth. Along with the traditional form of marketing, organic producers have now started to tap the online platforms, social media to reach a wider audience and that has also been helpful in the growth and expansion of the organic market. The far southern districts of Tamil Nadu have been

growing steadily in terms of infrastructural development, employment generation due to the various development schemes of the Government. With gradual growth, their wants and desires too have changed and the present study has been set to explore the customer perception towards organic products and its attributed in the southern districts of Tamil Nadu.

OBJECTIVES

- To understand the customers' perception towards organic products.
- To know the level of awareness of customers towards organic products.
- To study the level of perception towards organic products.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

A sample of 640 respondents was contacted for the study based on purposive sampling. A well constructed questionnaire was administered among them soliciting the required data. The respondents were purposively selected from the far southern districts of Tamil Nadu namely: Tirunelveli, Tuticorin, Kanyakumari and Tenkasi. Weighted Average Score has been used to statistically analyse the collected data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Consumer Perception of Organic Product Pricing

The perception of organic product pricing varies across different categories based on consumers' expectations of quality, health benefits, and necessity. This analysis provides insights into how consumers evaluate the pricing of various organic products such as staples, beverages, dairy, and specialty items. Understanding these perceptions can help businesses develop effective pricing strategies to meet consumer demands while maintaining competitive market positioning.

Table No. 1

Consumer Perception of Pricing Across Organic Product Categories

S.No	Particulars	Weighted Average Score	Result
1.	Pulses/Grains	3.58	High
2.	Fruits	2.87	Medium
3	Vegetables	3.12	Medium
4.	Coffee/Tea/Others	4.33	High
5.	Sugar/Jaggery	3.29	Medium
6.	Masala products	2.99	Medium
7.	Oil/Ghee	4.18	High
8.	Milk products	3.53	High

9.	Flowers	3.11	Medium
10.	Flour	3.38	Medium
11.	Snacks	4.15	High
12.	Ready to eat items	3.78	High
13.	Millets/cereals	4.33	High
14.	Beverages	2.68	Medium
15.	Herbs/Spices	3.21	High
16.	Dry fruits	4.39	High
17.	Baby products	3.88	High
18.	Textiles	4.24	High
19.	Meat	3.12	Medium
20.	Baby foods	4.22	High

Source: Primary Data

The table highlights that consumers perceive the pricing of certain essential items such as pulses, milk products, and oil as high, reflecting their awareness of the premium cost of organic staples. Specialty items like coffee, dry fruits, and baby products are also seen as expensive, but consumers may view them as worth the price due to their nutritional value or specific purpose. On the other hand, everyday items such as fruits, vegetables, and beverages are perceived to have medium pricing, which may align more with consumer expectations for affordability in regular consumption. This analysis suggests a need for a balanced approach to pricing, ensuring affordability in staple items while maintaining competitive pricing for premium organic products.

4.34 Perception of Organic Product Attributes

Consumers evaluate organic products based on various attributes such as health benefits, purity, and safety. These perceptions influence their buying decisions and trust in organic products. Analysing consumer agreement with key attributes helps identify the factors that enhance the appeal of organic products and areas where consumer confidence may be lower.

Table No. 2

Consumer Perception of Organic Product Attributes

S.No	Statement	Weighted Average Score	Result
1	Chemical Free	3.67	Agree
2	Natural	4.66	Strongly Agree
3	Pure/unadulterated	3.83	Agree

4	Healthy	4.85	Strongly Agree
5	Safe	2.63	Neutral
6	Non-GMO	4.17	Agree
7	High Nutritional value	4.86	Strongly Agree

Source: Primary Data

The table reveals that consumers strongly agree with the attributes "natural" (4.66), "healthy" (4.85), and "high nutritional value" (4.86), indicating that these qualities are key drivers for purchasing organic products. Consumers also agree that organic products are "chemical-free" (3.67), "pure/unadulterated" (3.83), and "non-GMO" (4.17), reflecting confidence in the integrity of organic products. However, the perception of safety scored lower at 2.63, indicating a neutral stance. This suggests that while consumers believe in the health benefits and natural aspects of organic products, some may have reservations about their overall safety, potentially due to concerns about quality control or regulatory oversight. Businesses can address this gap by emphasizing product safety certifications and transparent production practices to enhance consumer trust.

4.35 Level of Awareness About Organic Products

Consumer awareness about organic products encompasses several aspects, such as health and environmental benefits, market pricing, production processes, and certification. Understanding consumer awareness levels helps businesses and policymakers identify areas where education and transparency can be improved to enhance trust and informed purchasing.

Table No. 3

Level of Consumer Awareness About Organic Products

S.No.	Statements	Weighted Average Score	Result
1.	I am aware of the health benefits of organic products	4.28	High
2.	I am aware of the environmental benefits of organic products	3.42	Medium
3.	I am aware of various brands available organic products	2.66	Medium
4.	I am aware of various certifying agencies of organic products	2.14	Low
5.	I am aware of the logos /symbols involved in the process of certification	2.59	Medium

6.	I am aware of the recent Government rules involved in declaring a product organic	1.66	Low
7.	I am aware of the fake organic products in the market and able to identify them	4.23	High
8.	I am aware of the market pricing of the products available	4.39	High
9.	I am aware of the process involved in the production of organic products	3.74	High
10.	I am aware of the organic inputs like Vermicompost, Panchakavya, Dasakavya used in the production of organic products	3.44	Medium

Source: Primary Data

The table indicates a high level of awareness regarding the health benefits of organic products (4.28), the ability to identify fake organic products (4.23), market pricing (4.39), and the production processes involved (3.74). This shows that consumers are well-informed about the practical and financial aspects of organic products.

However, medium awareness scores for environmental benefits (3.42), available brands (2.66), and organic production inputs (3.44) suggest that consumers have some knowledge but may benefit from additional information.

Low awareness levels are observed for certifying agencies (2.14) and recent government regulations (1.66), indicating a significant gap in knowledge related to certifications, regulations, and the legitimacy of organic claims. This highlights a need for more educational campaigns focused on certification, regulations, and brand transparency to build consumer confidence in organic products.

4.36 Level of Perception Towards Organic Products

Consumer perceptions towards organic products are influenced by beliefs regarding their superiority, environmental impact, health benefits, and cost. Understanding these perceptions can help businesses and policymakers address concerns and reinforce positive attitudes toward organic products.

Table No. 4

Level of Consumer Perception Towards Organic Products

S.No.	Statements	Weighted Average Score	Result
1.	Organic products are far superior than the conventional products	3.23	Neutral
2.	Organic products offer a better future to the environment	4.35	Agree
3.	The deteriorating soil quality can be revived only by opting to organic cultivation practices	3.83	Agree
4.	Long term usage of organic products promotes health	4.22	Agree
5.	Organic food products offer better taste than conventional food products	2.65	Neutral
6.	Organic products represent freshness, purity and nutrition	4.32	Agree
7.	Usage of organic products provides and promotes a sense of assuredness and safe consumption	4.22	Agree
8.	The traditional methods involved in the production process retains the goodness in the organic products	3.87	Agree
9.	Consumption of organic products is also a status symbol	4.39	Agree
10.	With increased Government subsidy, the price of organic products may come down	3.12	Neutral

Source: Primary Data

The table shows that consumers generally agree with positive statements about organic products, particularly their environmental benefits (4.35), their role in promoting health through long-term use (4.22), and their representation of freshness, purity, and nutrition (4.32). Consumers also agree that organic products offer a sense of safety (4.22) and view them as a status symbol (4.39), reflecting a perceived premium value.

However, perceptions regarding the superiority of organic products over conventional ones (3.23) and their taste (2.65) remain neutral, indicating that consumers may not consistently experience noticeable differences in quality and taste. There is also a neutral stance on whether government subsidies could reduce organic product prices (3.12), reflecting skepticism about price changes despite potential policy interventions.

CONCLUSION

The study has explored the customer perception towards organic products and its attributes in the southern districts of Tamil Nadu. Customer perception towards pricing, their level of awareness and level of perception have been thoroughly analysed using Weighted Average Score. The results presented in the study shows an overall positive perception among the customers. With growing demand for healthier options, opting for organic tops it all. Often said to carry health benefits and prevent health hazards, organic products have become the go-to option. By taking necessary steps to boost the production and export, the Government can create a conducive environment for the producers of organic products.

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