

A study on consumer acceptability towards organic products and problems faced by consumers of organic products in Punjab

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Introduction:

In the 21st century it's very essential to support organic farming in Punjab. As it protects our future generation from the various harmful effects of chemicals and pesticides. Now Consumer are more concerned about their health and surrounding environment. Awareness to buy organic food is to be spread among the various users. Need of the hour is to develop and disseminate research findings for the corporate and government to frame policies and strategies to arrange the markets for organic crops produced by the farmers. A large number of studies have investigated consumer behaviour towards organic food purchases and challenges faced by consumers of organic products. The main factors responsible for the buying behaviour of consumers towards Organic food are health, environment, and food safety & quality. People are very health conscious. Excessive exposure to pesticides is linked to a number of diseases, influencing the reproductive and nervous systems, as well as cancer. The over-use of antibiotics and growth hormones in livestock products is also linked to various health conditions. Environmental concerns is also an important factor for many consumers. A study by Statista found that most German consumers buy organic foods because they believe organic farming is less polluting to the environment.

Acceptability of organic products:

As physiological needs of people fulfil, now they are moving towards the safety needs. They are more concerned about their health and environment. Various programmes have been organised by government and non government institutions to attract farmers toward organic farming. This is being done in order to save Punjab from excessive use of chemicals and fertilisers and to conserve ground water and maintain soil health. The organic farmers and

Intermediaries are facing various problems in the marketing of organic products. There must be organised market for farmers to sell their organic crops to the consumers at premium price. Consumers are not ready to accept organic crops because of authenticity. The United States is the world's largest Organic market, in which the demand of the Organic food is increasing and reflects the market growth of 11 percent. A report published by FiBL and IFOAM – Organics International "The World of Organic Agriculture" (2017 edition) shows that 179 countries report organic farming activities (up from 172), more land is certified Organic as farmers showing interest in Organic cultivation. There is more potential to grow. The government is spending crores of rupees on organic farming. Despite this, the awareness about organic farming and its benefits is still low in India

Challenges for Organic consumers:

The consumers are facing numerous problems as they are not having the open market for organic products. There must be supportive policies at state level and centre level to promote the organic farming. The government should provide research centres and labs for the testing and verification of organic products. There should be proper marketing arrangements for the organic products. Incentives and subsidies should be given to the organic farmers for the promotion of organic farming. Various course must be introduced on organic farming. The state government should make some elaborative plans for the promotion of organic farming in Punjab. The demand of the organic products in Punjab has been increasing day by day. As demand of organic products is increasing but the organic farming is not increasing at such a pace. In Europe and North America, various studies show that a small consumer base is responsible for most organic food purchases. Research conducted by Agence Bio showed that although 89 percent of French consumers buy organic foods, only 37 percent of this segment purchases them on a frequent basis (weekly or daily). The majority of organic foods are bought on an irregular basis. More consumers need to buy organic products on a regular basis if the market is to become mainstream

Literature Review:

Kumar Jatinder (2017)¹: The research based on primary data, has been conducted to know the consumer perception towards organic food consumption in Chandigarh. The result of the research shows that most of the consumer especially in urban people prefer organic food product but there is inadequate supply of organic food products and there is no availability of markets for organic produce. Consumer also considers it healthy to consume.

S.V. Ramesh and M. Divya (2015)⁴: The study is conducted to know the awareness, consumer attitude towards buying and consumer willingness to pay for organic products, in coimbatore city of Tamil Nadu.. It has been concluded in the research that consumption of

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organic food is increasing. Consumers are more concerned about their health and environment. Due to the increased consumer awareness they are more concerned about the qualities of food product, range of organic food product and organic labelling.

Basha Mohamed Bilal, Mason Cordelia, Shamsudin Mohd Farid , Iqbal Hussain Hafezali, Salem MiladAbdelnabi, Ali Azlan(2015)⁶: It is globally examined in the research to determine the underlying factors that might influence the tendency of consumer to purchase organic food. It has been concluded in the research that consumer behaviour is highly affected by the psychological process, which may affect the behaviour of the consumer in recognising the needs, finding ways to solve these needs; collect and interpret information; make plans and implement these plans, making purchase decisions and post-purchase behaviour.

Laheri Vishal Kumar, Arya Purushottam Kumar(2015)³ : The main purpose of the study is to understand the level of awareness among consumers towards organic food and barriers of purchasing organic food in Delhi. The result of the research clearly depicts that the market of green products in India is at nascent stage, and many consumers are unaware about the benefits associated with the products and the environment we inhabit. The results also shows that the price and availability of the organic products are the prime barriers towards purchasing organic food products.

Dr. Sharma Geetika, Dr. Dewan Rakhee, Bali Santosh (2013)²: The study mainly focused to determine the Awareness of Organic Food Products & to study the purchase behaviour, preference & factors affecting towards organic food in Chandigarh and Panchkula. Customers were approached randomly using a structured questionnaire. The result of the research shows that consumers are very much aware that organic food are good for health, these products are free from chemical which resulting in no side effects and do not cause harm to the consumers, who consume organic food products. The result also shows that majority of the respondents are preferred to purchase organic food but lack of availability is the major issue. Another factor in this study found that respondents are willing to pay even higher prices because of it is beneficial for health.

Aslihan Nasir & Fahri Karakaya(2014)⁷: The research made by author to examine the interest of consumers in organic foods market segments and understand their attitudes toward organic food consumption. The data from 316 consumers were collected from various supermarkets and malls in one of the largest metropolitan areas of a European city. It's concluded in research that consumer segment having favourable attitude towards organic food are more healthy and socially responsible consumption behaviour in comparison to the other segments.

SadekNurFathonah and OktaraniYuanandaParama(2009)⁸: The aim of this project is to educate in depth the behavioural process of customers with respect to organic food.. Survey has been done in 18 countries such as Norway, us, uk, Denmark, Ireland, and many more so it can be compared about organic perception in many countries. The result indicates that consumer's interest in organic food is influenced by their belief that organic food is better for health and the environment. This may provide a basis for worldwide education on the benefits of going organic.

Garibay Salvador v., katkejyoti (2003)⁵ : The research is to analyse the market opportunities and challenges of organic products in india. It has been concluded in the survey that Indian organic market has yet to be developed. At present India is in the nascent stage of organic farming. The major reason for the use of organic products was attributed to health consciousness. Lack of awareness is the main reason for non consumption of organic products. 85% of the total production is exported to other countries

Research Objectives

The objective of the research are as follows:

1. To access the consumer attitude towards organic products.
2. To analyze problems faced by Consumers of organic products in the selected area.

Research Methodology:

The study was undertaken in four selected districts of Punjab viz. Fatehgarh Sahib, Mohali, Patiala, Sangrur. The data has been collected from respondents in the form of questionnaire. Secondary data from various Government publications, statistical abstract of Punjab, international and national journals has also been used in the research.Various statistical technique like correlation, factor analysis is used to analyze the variables in the data. The sample size is 400 consumers equally divided among four districts. Non probability sampling technique that is stratified sampling has been used.

Factor Analysis :Initially, the factorability of the 52 variables was examined. Several well-recognized criteria for the factorability of a correlation were used. Negative questions have been reverse coded for the proper analysis of particular variable. Firstly, it was observed that 39 of the 52 items correlated, suggesting reasonable factorability. Secondly, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olin measure of sampling adequacy was .77, above the commonly recommended value of .6. Finally, the communalities were all above .4 (see Table 1.1), further confirming that each item shared some common variance with other items. Given these overall indicators, factor analysis was deemed to be suitable with all 39 items.

Total Variance As per the criteria stated by Kaiser that one should use a number of factors equals to the number of Eigen values of the correlation matrix that are greater than one. Initial Eigen values indicated that the first six factors explained 14.7%, 11.6%, 7.6%, 6.7%, 5.8%, 5.4% of the variance respectively. The seventh to fourteen factors had Eigen values just over one, and each explained 5%, 4.7%, 4.2%, 3.2%, 2.9%, 2.8, 2.7%, 2.6% of the variance respectively. There are 14 factors in the initial solution whose Eigen value is greater than 1, as from the 15th factor Eigen value drops down to .92. thus only 14 factors will be retained for the further studies. Together, they account for almost 80% of the variability in the original values. Factor 1 is the most important as it explained the variance of 14.7 % and then comes 2nd factor which explains the variance of 11.6%. factor 13 and 14 are least important because they explained the variance of just 2.6% each.

Component Matrix: The factors in the component matrix were identified with their attributes using oblimin rotation. The 39 attributes from the questionnaire were divided into 14 factors. The Table 1.1 shows the loading values of the 39 variables on the 14 extracted factors. The higher the factor loading, more the factor contributes to the variable. In other words factor loading describes the strength of relationship between the factors and variables grouped under that factor. The negative sign of the loading shows that the variable is negatively related with the given factor. A total of thirteen items were eliminated because they did not contribute to a simple factor structure and failed to meet a minimum criteria of having a primary factor loading of .4 or above, and no cross-loading of .3 or above. For the final stage, a principal components factor analysis of the remaining 39 items, using varimax and oblimin rotations, was conducted, with fourteen factors explaining 80% of the variance. An oblimin rotation provided the best defined factor structure. All items in this analysis had factor loadings over .5. Only one item had a factor-loading below .5 (contain more natural ingredients than conventional food). The factor loading matrix for this final solution is presented in Table below:

Table 1.1

Oblique Factor Analysis of the Consumer Perspective

Item	Greatest t Beta	Communal -ities	Factor
P12 Organic products are not available in full range of variety.	.987	.978	1, Availability of Organic products
P20 We cannot access these products in all season due to low amount in production of organic	.980	.964	1

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products.

A25 Wider product selection for organic food.	.971	.945	5
A23 Greater availability of organic food.	.954	.915	5
P2 There is less access to organic shops and markets.	.942	.895	1
P1 There is insufficient markets for organic products.	.922	.864	1
P16 There does not exist any suitable Places for supply of organic products	.960	.923	1, Lack of government support
P17 There does not exist, necessary standards about Organic products.	.954	.913	1
P14 There are no labs available, to check the authentication of Organic food Products.	.947	.900	1
P18 There does not exist appropriate custodian for monitoring on production methods of Organic Products.	.938	.883	1
P15 Lack of access to necessary information on organic products.	.897	.814	1
P13 The origin and source of organic food is not credible and trustworthy.	.977	.961	2, Originality
P8 Lack of information about Origin and Authenticity of organic products is the big problem faced by Buyers.	.973	.953	2
P9 Packaging and labeling of organic products should be self explanatory.	.966	.940	2
A13 Organic food products are better in quality in comparison to Conventional food.	.924	.876	1, Quality aspect
A12 Organic food products have superior quality.	.819	.746	1
P6 I am doubtful about the quality of organic products.	.704	.586	1

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P10 There are ample number of channels used for marketing.	.933	.895	1, Promotion
P11 Organic products are not promoted properly.	.929	.882	1
A24 More advertisements for organic food.	.699	.544	1
A3 Organic products are free from chemicals, pesticides and fertilizers.	.945	.914	1, Chemical free
A6 Organic food products are indeed safer and less risky than non organic products.	.944	.904	1
P3 Organic products are also available online.	.978	.965	3, Buying pattern
P4 I have to buy Organic products from the super market.	-.977	.963	3
A17 Buying organic food is a waste of money- it all tastes the same anyways.	.967	.951	2, Taste preference
P21 Taste of non-organic products is better than Organic products.	.960	.940	4
P5 I have to pay more for the organic products.	.885	.810	1, Willingness to pay
P7 I am dissatisfied with the organic products in terms of cost and quality.	-.855	.756	4
A10 Organic products consume less fossil energy and emit less greenhouse gases.	.748	.641	1, Environment beliefs
A7 organic farming has a friendly approach towards the environment.	.677	.629	1
A9 organic farming can protect the environment because it does not carry any harmful synthetic chemical, pesticides and fertilisers.	.650	.566	1
A26 Strong influence from family/ friends/ doctors & health experts.	.682	.553	2, Persuasiveness
A19 Due to the impact of social and medical pressure, I choose organic food.	.533	.682	1
A14 All products coming from organic agriculture	.833	.744	1, certification

are certified

A1I buy organic products because they are healthy for me and my family.	.810	.711	1, Healthy eaters
A4 Buying organic food shows that I am health conscious.	.544	.467	1
A2 Organic products have nutritional value and contain more vitamins and minerals.	.618	.529	1, Naturally Produced
A8 Organic farming can prevent the contamination and pollution of soil, air, water and food supply.	-.519	.544	1
A5 I believe that organic food contains more natural ingredients than conventional food.	.440	.550	1

Source: Primary survey conducted for this research (2018)

Factor 1 Availability of Organic Products

The first significant factor is the availability of the organic products. The variables of the factor were significantly correlated with each other. Variable P1 is significantly negatively correlated $r(400) = -.83$, $p < .001$ with variable A23 which clearly depicts that there are insufficient markets for organic products in the Punjab. Moreover P12 and A25 $r (400) = -.96$, $p < .001$ are also negatively correlated, states that variety of organic products are also not available. For instance, The respondents who claimed that organic products are not available in full range of variety, also said that they cannot access organic products in all seasons due to low availability. As due to its low availability, even consumers cannot access these products easily in the markets and shop. There are only few shops from which they can buy organic products. As there are organic markets once or twice in a week in few major cities of Punjab i.e Mohali, Ludhiana, Patiala etc. It is the main obstacle to the consumers of organic products i.e the availability. majority of the respondents are facing problems while accessing organic products in shops and markets. In addition organic products should be easily available in markets so that consumer can reach these products during their everyday shopping.

Factor 2 lack of Government Support

The next significant factor is lack of government support which is required for the development of the organic market. And inter item correlation($n = 400$ $r > .79$, $p < .001$) which resulted that variables are significantly correlated with each other thus makes a single component which named as lack of government support. The respondents claimed that there

are not necessary standards for the organic products and there must be central body and authority which monitors the working of the organic farmers and sellers. The result of the research also shows that labs are not available to check the authentication of organic products.

Factor 3 Originality

All the items are significantly correlated. A high correlation of ($n=400, r = .95, p < .001$) was found among the respondents who claimed that the origin and source of organic food is not credible and trustworthy and lack of information about origin and authenticity of organic products. It clearly shows that consumers had lack of trust on the sellers regarding that whether it is actually produced organically or not. They are doubtful about the authentication of organic product. That's why they claimed that each and every information regarding logo, stamping, certification and ingredients should be clearly defined on the packaging.

Factor 4 Quality Aspect

The results also signaled that majority of the respondents were doubtful about the quality of the organic products. That whether the organic products are actually produced organically or not. But still they have accepted that organic products have superior quality and better in quality in comparison to the conventional products because they are produced without using any chemical and pesticides. As high correlation has been found in A12 and A13 ($n=400, r = .75, p < .001$). There is positive perception and high concern about the safety and the quality of the organic food by consumer

Factor 5 Promotion

The respondents had accepted that organic products are not promoted properly. Even the sellers used ample number of channels for the marketing of organic products like exhibitions, pamphlets, discounts etc. but still due to its low availability it's not promoted properly. As correlation of ($n = 400, r = .90, p < .001$) has been found among these two variables. Thus there is need for more advertisement and promotion of organic products so that everyone will come to know about its benefits and effects.

Factor 6 Chemical free

This is one of the biggest attribute that organic products are produced without using any chemicals, pesticides and fertilizers. Only natural fertilizers being used for the growth of organic crops, which are not harmful for the human body. That's why they consider it safer and less risky. As correlation ($n=400, r = .89, p < .001$) has been found between A3 and A6. In Punjab due to intensive usage of chemicals and fertilizers, human health is deteriorated day by day. People are more prone to deadly diseases like cancer. Thus there is a great need to use the products which are chemical free to make the life safer, risk free and healthy.

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Factor 7 Buying Pattern

The negative correlation ($n=400, r = -.95, p < .001$) has been found in variable P3 and P4. Most of the respondents have neutral response towards these variables. Only few of the respondents said that organic products are available online, majority of respondents had neutral response(133) and disagreed(112) that organic products are available online. Out of the 400 respondents, 114 respondents were strongly agreed that organic products are available in super markets and 134 respondents had neutral response towards this. Thus it concludes that that people prefer to buy organic products from the super markets, rather than to buy online.. As online market has taken a huge place in Indian market. But still consumers are reluctant to buy organically produced food and products online.

Factor 8 Taste Preference

The respondents totally neglected this statement that buying organic is a waste of money- it all taste the same. They also disagreed with the perception that non organic products are better than organic products. As high positive correlation and significance level ($n = 400, r = .93, p < .001$) has been found among A17 and P21 Thus it can be concluded that people believe that taste of organic products is much better than non organic products, so its not a wastage of money to buy organic food, either from taste preference or from health prospective.

Factor 9 Willingness to pay

The study also reveals that even though the price is expensive, consumer still willing to buy the organic products to reduce the risk to their health. They have to pay premium price for the organic products. They also denied this statement that organic products did not require more cost to produce. Its been proved in the research that organic products need more cost in the form of labour, seed, sale etc in comparison to conventional products. There is negative correlation ($n = 400, r = -.63, p < .001$) between variable P5 and P7

Factor 10 Environment Beliefs

The cronbachs alpha for the three variables is just .491, suggesting that the items have relatively low internal consistency. As correlation ($n = 400, r < .30, p < .05$) has been found among these three variables. Which also suggest that Its been accepted by the consumers that organic products are more environment friendly. As due to less consumption of less fossil energy, it protects our environment from harmful gases.

Factor 11 Persuasiveness

A very weak but significant correlation ($n = 400, r = .097, p < .05$) exist in variable A1 and A4. And clearly depicts that strong influence from family/ friends/doctors and health experts and due to impact of medical and social pressure are not very closely interrelated.

Factor 12 Certification

Organic certification would give a positive influence on consumer product perceptions as it is considered as a valuable component while buying. This indicates that consumer relied very much on the certification and labelling of organic product when deciding purchasing decision. Certification of the organic farm is proof that products are genuine and actually produced without using any harmful chemicals and pesticides.

Factor 13 Healthy eaters

Respondents seems to be more conscious about their health aspect. The majority research study stated that health is also one of the reason which motivates consumer to accept and buy organically produced products. A very weak but significant correlation ($n = 400, r = .116, p < .05$) exist between, I buy organic because they are healthy for me and my family and buying organic shows I am health conscious. It concludes respondents care more about values and health is more important to them.

Factor 14 Naturally Produced

As the variables in this factor are not reliable enough to express this particular factor as cronbach's alpha is just .124 and moreover the relation among variable is also very weak.

Correlation Analysis

The next output of the analysis is the correlation matrix. It is a method to determine the extent to which factors are distinct and uncorrelated. Table 4.36 of component correlation matrix showing that how each of the 14 factors associated with each of the other 13. Although an oblimin rotation was used, only small correlations between each of the composite scores existed. It's noted that, the significance level of all the factors is below 0.05. Factor 1 i.e availability of organic products is positively related with government support (.05), promotion(.01), taste preference(.007), willingness to pay(.09), environmental beliefs(.05), certification(.03) and healthy eaters(.003) are negatively related with the other remaining factors. The factor government support is almost negatively related with the all the remaining factors. Its only positively related with originality(.04), food attributes(.03), availability of organic products(.05,)buying pattern(.007). It can be seen in the table that significance level among all the factors is extremely very low thus suggest that any two factors cannot be combined into a single factor.

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Table 1.2

Correlations among the Factors (N = 400)

Factor	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
1	1.00													
2	.055	1.00												
3	-.061	.042	1.00											
4	-.010	-.022	.007	1.00										
5	.011	-.046	.023	.012	1.00									
6	.097	-.037	-.044	.039	.071	1.00								
7	.017	.007	.011	-.028	-.034	-.023	1.00							
8	.007	-.144	.014	-.089	-.003	-.052	.044	1.00						
9	.096	-.022	-.007	-.042	-.036	-.016	.091	.035	1.00					
10	.057	-.021	.017	.158	.061	.132	-.036	-.064	-.091	1.00				
11	-.027	-.032	-.028	.039	.010	-.018	-.007	-.039	.062	.013	1.00			
12	.031	-.034	.016	.030	.024	-.048	.068	.032	.057	-.001	.041	1.00		
13	.003	-.011	-.064	.036	.056	.173	-.013	-.131	.009	.079	.022	-.028	1.00	
14	-.005	-.053	.028	-.052	-.042	.030	.008	-.003	.004	-.010	.025	.008	.02	1.00
														7

Source: Primary survey conducted for this research (2018)

Findings of the study

The finding of the study are as follows:

1. Consumer are more concerned about their health and surrounding environment.
2. The study reveals that even though the price is expensive, consumer still willing to buy the organic products to reduce the risk to their health.
3. It is also accepted by the consumers that taste of organic products is much better than non organic products
4. The consumers are not having the open market for organic products.
5. There are not supportive policies at state level and centre level to promote the organic farming.
6. There are not research centres and labs for the testing and verification of organic products.
7. Consumers are also doubtful about the authentication of organic product.
8. There are insufficient markets and variety for organic products and supply of organic products is also very limited.

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