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Consumer Awareness and Purchase Intention Towards Organic Food Products: A Study in Thiruvananthapuram Taluk, Kerala

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ABSTRACT

The present study examines consumer awareness, attitudes and purchase intention towards organic food products. Growing concerns regarding health, food safety, environmental sustainability and product quality have increased consumer interest in organic food products. The study aims to assess the level of consumer awareness, examine the factors influencing purchase decisions, analyse consumers' attitudes and perceptions, identify the major barriers to purchase and examine the relationship between consumer awareness and purchase intention. The study adopts a descriptive and analytical research design and is based on both primary and secondary data. Primary data were collected from **110 respondents** through a structured questionnaire using convenience sampling. Percentage analysis, mean, standard deviation, Cronbach's Alpha, factor analysis and Pearson's correlation were used for analysing the data. The findings indicate that consumers have a reasonable level of awareness and generally positive perceptions towards organic food products. Health benefits and product quality were identified as important factors influencing purchase decisions, while high price and limited availability were major barriers. The correlation analysis indicated a positive and significant relationship between consumer awareness and purchase intention. The study suggests that improved consumer awareness, transparent certification, affordable pricing, wider availability and effective product information can contribute to greater acceptance and purchase of organic food products.

Keywords: Organic Food Products, Consumer Awareness, Consumer Attitude, Health Consciousness, Environmental Concern, Purchase Intention, Consumer Behaviour

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, growing concerns about health, food safety, environmental sustainability, and the use of chemical inputs in agriculture have increased consumer interest in organic food products. Organic foods are generally associated with production practices that emphasize natural inputs, ecological balance, and reduced dependence on synthetic fertilizers, pesticides, and other chemical substances. Consumers increasingly perceive organic food as healthier, safer, environmentally friendly, and better in quality than conventionally produced food. As a result, organic food products have become an important segment of the changing food market.

Consumer awareness plays an important role in influencing the acceptance and purchase of organic food products. Awareness includes consumers' knowledge about organic production methods, certification, labelling, nutritional characteristics, health benefits, environmental benefits, and the differences between organic and conventional food products. However, awareness alone may not necessarily result in purchase intention. Consumers may have a positive attitude towards organic food but may hesitate to purchase it because of factors such as higher prices, limited availability, lack of trust, insufficient information, and uncertainty regarding product authenticity.

The growth of supermarkets, organic food stores, online shopping platforms, and digital marketing has significantly changed the way consumers obtain information about food products. Social media, online advertisements, customer reviews, websites, and digital content provide consumers with greater access to information about organic food and its perceived benefits. These digital sources can influence consumer

perceptions and purchasing decisions. At the same time, concerns about misleading claims, certification, product quality, price, and availability may affect consumers' confidence in organic food products.
Health consciousness and environmental concern are also important factors influencing consumer behaviour. Consumers who are concerned about healthy lifestyles may show greater interest in organic food products because of their perceived health and safety benefits. Similarly, consumers who are environmentally conscious may prefer products associated with sustainable agricultural practices. In addition, factors such as perceived quality, brand image, price, trust in certification, availability, and previous purchasing experience can influence consumers' willingness to purchase organic products.

From a Commerce perspective, organic food consumption is closely associated with consumer behaviour, marketing, pricing, retailing, digital commerce, brand management, and sustainable consumption. Understanding these dimensions is important for producers and marketers to develop appropriate product, pricing, distribution, and promotional strategies. It is equally important to understand whether increased consumer awareness actually contributes to a stronger intention to purchase organic food products.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Poddar and Ahmad (2021), in their study titled "GST and Its Impact on Small and Medium Enterprises in India," examined the implications of GST on the functioning of small and medium enterprises. The study found that GST helped simplify the indirect tax structure and facilitated smoother movement of goods across states. However, small businesses experienced difficulties related to online registration, return filing, accounting procedures, and compliance costs. The researchers suggested that greater awareness and technical support were necessary to enable MSMEs to adapt effectively to the GST regime.
Kumar and Kumar (2020), in their study titled "Impact of Goods and Services Tax on MSMEs in India," analysed the effects of GST on the financial and operational activities of MSMEs. The study revealed that GST improved transparency and reduced the cascading effect of indirect taxes. However, smaller enterprises faced challenges in maintaining digital records and meeting periodic filing requirements. The study concluded that simplified procedures and continuous training could reduce the compliance burden on MSMEs.

Sharma and Agarwal (2020), in their study titled "Goods and Services Tax and Its Implications for Small Businesses in India," examined the impact of GST on small business operations. The findings indicated that GST created a more uniform taxation system and enhanced business opportunities across state boundaries. At the same time, businesses with limited technological knowledge faced difficulties in online compliance and documentation. The authors recommended greater digital literacy and institutional assistance for small enterprises.

Mukherjee (2019), in the study titled "Impact of GST on the Indian Economy," assessed the broader economic implications of GST, including its effect on business activities and taxation. The study found that GST contributed to the creation of a common national market and improved tax administration. However, transitional difficulties were observed among smaller businesses due to changes in accounting practices and compliance procedures. The study emphasized the need for effective implementation and continuous policy refinement.

Dash and Behera (2019), in their study titled "GST and Small and Medium Enterprises: Issues and Challenges," investigated the major difficulties faced by SMEs after the introduction of GST. The study reported that compliance requirements, technological dependence, and lack of awareness were significant challenges for small enterprises. At the same time, GST provided benefits through input tax credit and greater market integration. The researchers suggested simplified compliance procedures and awareness programmes for MSMEs.
Nayak and Sahu (2018), in their study titled "Goods and Services Tax in India: Impact on Business and Tax Compliance," examined the changes experienced by businesses following GST implementation. The study found that GST reduced the complexity associated with multiple indirect taxes and improved transparency in taxation. However, businesses, particularly small enterprises, encountered difficulties in understanding GST provisions and filing returns electronically. The authors concluded that training and professional guidance were essential for effective GST compliance.

Statement Of The Problem

The introduction of the Goods and Services Tax (GST) in India brought significant changes to the indirect taxation system and affected the functioning of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs). GST was introduced with the objectives of creating a uniform tax structure, reducing the cascading effect of taxes, improving tax transparency, and facilitating the movement of goods and services across states. While these changes have provided several opportunities for MSMEs, they have also created certain operational and compliance-related challenges.
MSMEs play an important role in employment generation, income creation, entrepreneurship development and economic growth. However, many MSMEs have limited financial resources, technological knowledge and

administrative support. The implementation of GST has increased the importance of digital registration, electronic invoicing, online return filing, record maintenance and timely tax compliance. These requirements may create additional costs and administrative burdens, particularly for micro and small enterprises.

At the same time, GST has provided benefits such as input tax credit, wider market access, greater transparency and reduction in multiple indirect taxes. However, the extent to which MSMEs have benefited from these provisions may differ according to their size, nature of business, level of digital literacy and awareness of GST regulations. Frequent changes in GST rules and compliance procedures may also create difficulties for enterprises in maintaining regular compliance.

Therefore, there is a need to examine how GST has affected the operational performance, financial aspects, compliance burden, digital adoption and business opportunities of MSMEs. The present study attempts to identify the major benefits and challenges experienced by MSMEs under the GST regime and to understand the factors influencing their effective adoption and compliance with GST requirements.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The present study focuses on examining the impact of Goods and Services Tax (GST) on Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs). It covers the awareness and understanding of GST provisions among MSME owners and their experiences with GST registration and compliance. The study examines online return filing, digital record maintenance and input tax credit facilities. It also considers the changes in accounting practices after GST implementation. The study further examines the effect of GST on business operations and financial performance. Particular attention is given to compliance costs and administrative difficulties. The study also identifies the major benefits obtained by MSMEs through GST. It provides an understanding of the overall changes experienced by MSMEs under the GST system.

The study also covers the challenges faced by MSMEs in adapting to the digital GST environment. It examines difficulties related to online filing, documentation, tax payment and understanding regulatory changes. The study considers whether GST has helped MSMEs expand their markets and improve business transparency. It also examines the role of GST awareness and digital knowledge in effective compliance. Differences based on the size and nature of MSME activities may also be considered. The study is confined to selected MSMEs and their owners or representatives. The findings reflect the perceptions and experiences of the selected respondents. The study is expected to be useful to MSME entrepreneurs, policymakers and tax authorities. It may also provide suggestions for improving GST compliance and support mechanisms for MSMEs.

Organic Food

Organic food refers to food products produced using agricultural methods that generally avoid synthetic chemical fertilizers, synthetic pesticides, genetically modified organisms (GMOs), and unnecessary chemical additives. Organic farming emphasizes the use of natural inputs, soil health, ecological balance, and environmentally sustainable practices. Examples include organic fruits, vegetables, grains, pulses, milk, and processed food products that meet applicable organic production and certification standards.

Organic Food Products

Organic food products are food items produced, processed, and handled according to organic farming and production standards. They are generally produced using natural farming practices with limited or no use of synthetic pesticides, chemical fertilizers, genetically modified organisms (GMOs), and certain artificial inputs. Organic production emphasizes soil health, ecological balance, environmental protection, and sustainable agricultural practices.

Bjectives Of The Study

1. To assess the level of consumer awareness regarding organic food products.
2. To examine the factors influencing consumers' purchase decisions towards organic food products.
3. To analyse consumers' attitudes and perceptions towards the quality, health benefits and safety of organic food products.
4. To identify the major factors discouraging consumers from purchasing organic food products, such as high price, limited availability and lack of information.
5. To examine the relationship between consumer awareness and purchase intention towards organic food products.

Hypotheses Of The Study

H_{01}: There is no significant relationship between consumer awareness and purchase intention towards organic food products.

H_{02}: There is no significant relationship between consumers' attitudes and purchase intention towards organic food products.

H_{03}: There is no significant relationship between health consciousness and purchase intention towards organic food products.
H_{04}: There is no significant relationship between environmental concern and purchase intention towards organic food products.
H_{05}: There is no significant difference in purchase intention towards organic food products based on the demographic characteristics of consumers.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The present study adopts a descriptive and analytical research design to examine consumer awareness, attitudes and purchasing behaviour towards organic food products. The descriptive aspect of the study focuses on understanding the demographic profile of the respondents, their awareness of organic food products, health consciousness, environmental concern, attitudes and purchasing patterns. The analytical aspect examines the factors influencing consumers' purchase decisions and purchase intention towards organic food products. The study also attempts to identify the relationship between consumer awareness, attitude, health consciousness, environmental concern and purchase intention. The research design is considered appropriate for systematically collecting, analysing and interpreting information obtained from the selected respondents.

Source of Data

The study is based on both primary and secondary data sources. Primary data provide first-hand information regarding consumers' perceptions and purchasing behaviour, while secondary data provide the theoretical and conceptual foundation for the study.

Primary Data

Primary data are collected directly from 110 consumers through a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire is divided into different sections covering the demographic profile of the respondents, awareness of organic food products, attitudes towards organic food, health consciousness, environmental concern, purchasing behaviour, factors influencing purchase decisions and purchase intention. The questionnaire includes multiple-choice questions, categorical questions and statements measured using **a** five-point Likert scale**,** where appropriate. The responses obtained from the respondents form the main basis for statistical analysis and interpretation.

Secondary Data

Secondary data are collected from various reliable sources such as research journals, books, articles, government publications, reports, newspapers, magazines, websites and previous research studies relating to organic food, consumer behaviour, organic agriculture, health consciousness, environmental sustainability and purchase intention. Previous empirical studies are reviewed to understand the major variables associated with consumers' purchase decisions. Secondary sources are also used to develop the conceptual framework and formulate the objectives and hypotheses of the study.

Sampling Technique

The study employs Convenience Sampling for selecting the respondents. Under this method, consumers who are easily accessible and willing to participate in the study are selected as respondents. The technique is suitable for collecting primary data within the available time and resources. Efforts are made to include respondents from different demographic and socio-economic backgrounds so that diverse consumer perceptions towards organic food products can be captured.

Sample Size

A total of 110 respondents are selected for the study. The sample includes consumers belonging to different age groups, gender categories, educational qualifications, occupations and income levels. The selected sample provides sufficient responses for examining consumer awareness, attitudes, purchasing behaviour and purchase intention towards organic food products. The collected data are systematically coded, classified and analysed using appropriate statistical techniques.

Sampling Unit

The individual consumer constitutes the sampling unit of the study. The respondents include consumers who have purchased, consumed or are aware of organic food products. The study considers their personal perceptions, awareness, attitudes, health concerns, environmental concerns and purchasing preferences in relation to organic food products.

Study Area

The study is confined to Thiruvananthapuram Taluk, Kerala. The area includes consumers with different demographic, educational, occupational and income characteristics. The selected study area provides an appropriate setting for examining consumer awareness and purchasing behaviour towards organic food products. The study attempts to understand the factors that encourage or discourage consumers from purchasing organic food products within the selected geographical area.

TOOLS FOR DATA ANALYSIS

The data collected from the 110 respondents are systematically classified, coded and analysed using appropriate statistical tools. The following tools are used in accordance with the objectives and hypotheses of the study:

- **Percentage Analysis**
- **Mean and Standard Deviation**
- **Cronbach's Alpha**
- **Factor Analysis**
- **Pearson's Correlation Analysis**

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

- The study is limited to a sample of 110 respondents, and therefore the findings may not completely represent the opinions of the entire consumer population.
- The study is geographically confined to Thiruvananthapuram Taluk, Kerala. Hence, the findings may not be directly generalised to consumers in other districts or states.
- The study uses convenience sampling, which may limit the representativeness of the sample because all consumers may not have an equal probability of being selected.

Table 1: Level of Awareness Regarding Organic Food Products

Level of Awareness	Frequency	Percentage
Highly aware	24	21.82
Aware	38	34.55
Moderately aware	28	25.45
Less aware	14	12.73
Not aware	6	5.45
Total	**110**	**100.00**

Sources: Primary data

The above table shows the level of awareness of respondents regarding organic food products. Out of 110 respondents, 38 respondents (34.55%) are aware of organic food products, followed by 28 respondents (25.45%) who are moderately aware**. A** further 24 respondents (21.82%) are highly aware, while 14 respondents (12.73%) have less awareness. Only 6 respondents (5.45%) are not aware of organic food products. Thus, the findings indicate that a considerable proportion of consumers have awareness of organic food products.

Table 2: Factors Influencing Purchase Decisions

Factors	Frequency	Percentage
Health benefits	32	29.09
Product quality	21	19.09
Price	14	12.73
Environmental benefits	13	11.82
Availability	10	9.09
Certification/Organic label	8	7.27
Brand reputation	7	6.36
Taste	5	4.55
Total	**110**	**100.00**

Sources: Primary data

The above table indicates the factors influencing consumers' purchase decisions towards organic food products. Health benefits are the most important factor, reported by 32 respondents (29.09%). Product quality is the second

major factor, accounting for 21 respondents (19.09%). Price influences 14 respondents (12.73%), while environmental benefits influence 13 respondents (11.82%). Availability is reported by 10 respondents (9.09%). Certification, brand reputation and taste account for 7.27%, 6.36% and 4.55%, respectively. The findings indicate that health benefits and product quality are prominent considerations in consumers' decisions to purchase organic food products.

Table 3: Consumers' Attitudes and Perceptions

Statements	Mean	Standard Deviation
Organic food is healthier than conventional food	4.12	0.78
Organic food is safer for consumption	4.05	0.81
Organic food products are of better quality	3.98	0.86
Organic food contains fewer harmful chemicals	4.18	0.74
Organic food provides better nutritional value	3.91	0.89
Organic food is environmentally friendly	4.08	0.76
Overall Mean	**4.05**	**0.81**

Sources: Computed data

Scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree.

The above table presents the attitudes and perceptions of consumers towards organic food products. The highest mean score of 4.18 is recorded for the statement that organic food contains fewer harmful chemicals. This is followed by the perception that organic food is healthier, with a mean score of 4.12. Environmental friendliness records a mean of 4.08, while safety records 4.05. The perception regarding better quality records a mean of 3.98, and better nutritional value records 3.91**.** The overall mean score of 4.05 indicates a generally positive perception of organic food products among the respondents.

Table 4: Factors Discouraging Purchase

Factors	Frequency	Percentage
High price	31	28.18
Limited availability	19	17.27
Lack of awareness	16	14.55
Lack of trust in organic labels	13	11.82
Lack of certification information	10	9.09
Difficulty identifying genuine products	9	8.18
Limited variety	7	6.36
Lack of information	5	4.55
Total	**110**	**100.00**

Sources: Computed data

The above table shows the major factors discouraging consumers from purchasing organic food products. High price is the major barrier, reported by 31 respondents (28.18%). This is followed by limited availability, reported by 19 respondents (17.27%), and lack of awareness, reported by 16 respondents (14.55%). Lack of trust in organic labels accounts for 11.82%, while lack of certification information accounts for 9.09%. Difficulty in identifying genuine organic products, limited variety and lack of information account for 8.18%, 6.36% and 4.55%, respectively. The findings indicate that price and availability are important barriers to the purchase of organic food products.

Table 5: Correlation between Consumer Awareness and Purchase Intention

Variables	Consumer Awareness	Purchase Intention
Consumer Awareness	1.000	**0.684**
Purchase Intention	**0.684**	1.000
Sig. (2-tailed)	—	**0.000**
N	**110**	**110**

Sources: Computed data

The above table shows the relationship between consumer awareness and purchase intention towards organic food products. The Pearson correlation coefficient is 0.684**,** indicating a positive relationship between consumer awareness and purchase intention. The significance value is 0.000, which is less than the 0.05 level of significance.

Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis is accepted. Hence, there is a statistically significant positive relationship between consumer awareness and purchase intention towards organic food products among the respondents.

Findings Of The Study

1. The study found that 34.55% of the respondents are aware of organic food products, while 25.45% have moderate awareness and 21.82% have high awareness. This indicates that the majority of respondents possess at least a basic level of awareness regarding organic food products.
2. The study revealed that health benefits are the major factor influencing the purchase of organic food products, reported by 29.09% of the respondents. Product quality was the second major factor with 19.09%, followed by price (12.73%) and environmental benefits (11.82%).
3. The findings indicate that consumers have a positive perception towards organic food products**.** The overall mean score of 4.05 indicates a favourable attitude among the respondents. The highest mean score of 4.18 was recorded for the perception that organic food contains fewer harmful chemicals.
4. The study found that high price is the major barrier to purchasing organic food products, reported by 28.18% of the respondents. Limited availability was the second major barrier (17.27%), followed by lack of awareness (14.55%) and lack of trust in organic labels (11.82%).
5. The correlation analysis revealed a positive relationship between consumer awareness and purchase intention, with a Pearson correlation coefficient of 0.684. The relationship was statistically significant at the 5% level ($p = 0.000$). This indicates that higher consumer awareness is associated with stronger purchase intention towards organic food products.

Suggestions

1. Organic food producers and marketers should conduct awareness programmes through social media, television, educational institutions and community activities to improve consumers' knowledge about organic food products and their benefits.
2. Producers and retailers should adopt cost-effective production and distribution practices to reduce the price of organic food products, as high price is one of the major barriers to purchase.
3. Proper organic certification and transparent labelling should be promoted to help consumers identify genuine organic products and increase their confidence in the products.
4. The availability of organic food products should be improved through supermarkets, organic stores, farmers' markets and reliable online platforms to make them easily accessible to consumers.
5. Producers should provide clear information regarding ingredients, production methods, certification, nutritional characteristics and environmental benefits on product packaging.
6. Marketing activities should appropriately communicate the health, safety and environmental benefits of organic food products and provide consumers with reliable product information.

CONCLUSION

The present study examined consumer awareness, attitudes and purchase intention towards organic food products among 110 respondents. The findings indicate that consumers generally possess a reasonable level of awareness and have a positive perception towards organic food products. Health benefits and product quality were identified as important factors influencing consumers' purchase decisions. The study also found that consumers perceive organic food as healthier, safer and environmentally friendly. These positive perceptions indicate growing consumer interest in organic food products and their associated benefits.

However, high price, limited availability, lack of awareness and concerns regarding certification and product authenticity remain important barriers to purchase. The correlation analysis revealed a significant positive relationship between consumer awareness and purchase intention, indicating the importance of providing consumers with reliable information about organic products. Therefore, greater awareness, affordable pricing, wider availability, transparent certification and effective consumer education can contribute to increased acceptance and purchase of organic food products. The study concludes that coordinated efforts by producers, marketers, retailers and relevant institutions can support the sustainable growth of the organic food market.

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