



Consumer Buying Behavior towards Organic Food Products among Urban Households

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The organic food industry is rapidly gaining traction in urban markets due to increasing consumer awareness around health, sustainability, and food safety. As people grow more conscious about the harmful effects of pesticides, synthetic additives, and genetically modified organisms, organic food has emerged as a healthier and more ethical alternative. This research examines the behavior of urban households in Ludhiana, Punjab—a fast-growing Tier-2 city—towards the consumption of organic food products. The study shows how consumer awareness, health motivations, pricing, accessibility, trust in certification, and socio-cultural factors shape purchasing decisions.

The research is grounded in a descriptive design and employs a quantitative methodology to gather insights through structured questionnaires. Statistical tools such as factor analysis and regression modeling are used to examine the significance and impact of various influencing factors. Findings reveal that internal drivers like health consciousness and environmental concern are positively associated with higher purchase intent, while barriers such as price sensitivity and limited product availability hinder consistent consumption. Additionally, trust in certification and digital marketing influence purchase behavior significantly, especially among younger, socially aware consumers.

This study provides critical insights for producers, marketers, and policymakers in the organic food sector. It emphasizes the importance of transparent labeling, strategic pricing, and targeted communication to build trust and improve accessibility. The findings aim to guide stakeholders in creating more effective, consumer-centric strategies to boost organic food adoption in urban markets. By focusing on Ludhiana as a case study, the research adds valuable understanding to the broader narrative of sustainable consumption in emerging Indian cities.

Keywords: Consumer Awareness, Food Safety, Organic Food, Health Motivations, Transparent Labeling

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1. Introduction

The increasing awareness of health and environmental issues has led to a growing interest in organic food products worldwide. In India, urban households are progressively adopting organic foods, driven by concerns over food safety, health benefits, and environmental sustainability. Ludhiana, as a major urban center in Punjab, presents a unique case for studying consumer behavior towards organic food products. As consumers become more health-conscious, they are also more critical of food production processes, favoring products free from synthetic pesticides, chemicals, and genetically modified organisms.

However, challenges such as higher costs, limited availability, and skepticism about authenticity often deter consumers from fully embracing organic products. This research aims to explore the factors that influence the buying behavior of urban households in Ludhiana regarding organic food, focusing on awareness, purchase motivators as well as their impact on purchase decisions.

Key motivators for choosing organic products include health concerns, environmental consciousness, and a preference for natural food sources. Health awareness, for instance, has positively influenced the purchasing behavior of urban consumers, particularly post-pandemic, as people seek food options with perceived immunity benefits.

Ludhiana represents a microcosm of urban India's evolving consumer base. The city's economic development has led to a rise in disposable income and a growing middle class, creating a favorable environment for organic products.

Income segmentation plays a crucial role in shaping organic food consumption patterns in urban areas. Organic products are typically more expensive than their conventional counterparts, making them less accessible to lower-income households. As a result, income levels significantly influence who can afford to prioritize organic food in their diet. In urban India, where income disparity exists, higher-income groups are more likely to purchase organic food regularly, as they have the financial flexibility to absorb the premium prices.

2. Review of Literature

Chaturvedi et al. (2024) explored the role of consumer ethnocentrism in influencing preferences for locally produced organic food in India. They found that cultural pride and support for domestic products encourage organic purchases, though price and perceived quality remain challenges.

Dixit et al. (2024) analyzed barriers to organic farming in developing countries, highlighting certification costs, limited government support, and market access as key issues. They recommend policy-level interventions and better infrastructure to support wider adoption.

Prasanth & Sivakanni (2024) identified health consciousness, environmental awareness, and product quality as major motivators for organic purchases. They also noted that high prices and low availability limit regular buying behavior, especially in price-sensitive markets.

Sadiq et al. (2023) applied the Attitude–Behavior–Context (ABC) model to show that while health and environmental attitudes influence organic food interest, situational constraints like price and availability affect actual purchasing behavior.

Parashar et al. (2023) studied the moderating role of consumer attitude, finding that health and environmental awareness significantly boost purchase intention when coupled with a positive mindset toward organic food.

Siddiqui et al. (2023) used a mixed-method approach to highlight the impact of quality, price, brand trust, and health perceptions on agri-food choices, while also emphasizing the role of socio-cultural and psychological factors.

Yang et al. (2023) demonstrated that intrinsic health values and social norms strongly influence intentions to purchase organic food, suggesting that marketing strategies should appeal to both personal beliefs and social influence.

Parveen Banu et al. (2023) focused on consumer attitudes in Chennai, showing that health, trust in quality, and sustainability drive organic food interest. However, price and limited accessibility are significant barriers to frequent purchases.

Singh & Alok (2022) examined repurchase intentions for organic food in India, revealing that socially responsible consumers are more loyal,

especially when quality and value are perceived as high. However, price remains a significant barrier, highlighting the need for competitive pricing and loyalty programs.

Zayed et al. (2022) studied Egyptian consumers and found that health, environmental concerns, and social influence shape purchase intentions. However, high prices and limited access hinder adoption, suggesting the importance of affordability and awareness campaigns.

Gundala & Singh (2021) identified health, sustainability, and quality as key drivers of organic food purchases in the U.S., with consumer trust in labeling playing a crucial role in justifying premium prices.

Kane-Potaka et al. (2021) focused on millet and sorghum in urban India, where health benefits encourage consumption but perceptions of these as traditional or rural foods limit appeal. Education and marketing are key to increasing adoption.

Nagaraj et al. (2021) found that health consciousness and food safety drive organic food preferences, with attitudes playing a mediating role in purchase intentions—especially in emerging markets where contamination concerns are high.

Eyinate et al. (2021) synthesized global research to highlight health, quality, and environmental concern as motivators. However, they stressed the need for better labeling, certification, and affordability to overcome economic and structural barriers.

Mohammed (2021) found that in Saudi Arabia, organic food choices are influenced by health, environmental awareness, and religious beliefs. Price remains a limiting factor for middle-income consumers.

Domle et al. (2021) linked the COVID-19 pandemic to increased demand for organic food due to heightened health concerns. They suggest marketers emphasize immunity and nutritional benefits to capitalize on this trend.

Kumar (2021) applied the Theory of Planned Behavior to Indian consumers, showing that environmental attitudes and social norms shape green buying behavior, while affordability and accessibility determine actual purchases.

Kowalska et al. (2021) found that young consumers in Poland and the UK associate organic food with health and sustainability, but affordability and access remain barriers. Targeted pricing and value-based marketing were recommended.

Jaiswal et al. (2021) segmented Indian consumers based on environmental attitudes, highlighting that some prioritize sustainability while others are driven by price. They suggest a segmented marketing approach for better outreach.

Talwar et al. (2021) emphasized the role of product labels and health information in influencing behavior. Clear, informative packaging can enhance purchase willingness by reinforcing trust and perceived benefits.

Srivastava (2021) identified health, environment, and labeling trust as key influences in India. Price and availability deter purchases, pointing to the need for education and wider access to organic options.

Tandon et al. (2020) explored the behavioral reasoning behind organic purchases, emphasizing health, ethics, and social norms. Their work stresses the role of beliefs and perceived control in influencing behavior.

Pandey et al. (2020) examined how urbanization has shifted food habits toward convenience, while also sparking interest in healthy options. They recommend marketing organic food as both convenient and health-enhancing.

Hansmann et al. (2020) proposed a model showing that health, ethics, and environmental values drive demand, while skepticism, price, and availability serve as barriers. Consumer education is essential to bridge these gaps.

d'Amour et al. (2020) discussed how urbanization leads to poor dietary choices, but also opens a market for organic alternatives if marketed as healthy, modern options.

Das et al. (2020) outlined challenges in India's organic farming sector—like certification costs and market access—but emphasized its potential in promoting sustainability and public health if

supported by policy reforms.

Rana & Paul (2020) conducted a meta-analysis confirming that health is the leading motivator for organic food purchases.

Consumers perceive organic products as safer and more nutritious. However, high prices and limited availability remain key deterrents. The study recommends that marketers emphasize health benefits while improving accessibility to expand consumer adoption.

Bazaluk et al. (2020) explored the global growth of the organic food market with a focus on Ukraine. They highlight rising global demand driven by health and environmental concerns, but also point out challenges like certification, quality control, and market access. They advocate for policy support to help emerging economies tap into this growing sector.

Cachero-Martínez (2020) studied how environmental concern influences organic food purchases. The research finds that while eco-conscious consumers are more inclined to buy organic, real purchase behavior is still shaped by price and availability. The study recommends that marketers combine environmental messaging with practical solutions to overcome these barriers.

3. Objectives of the Study

1. To identify awareness levels of organic food products among urban households in Ludhiana.
2. To analyze factors influencing purchase decisions on the purchase of organic food products, such as health benefits, environmental concerns, and perceived quality.
3. To measure the impact of the factors affecting purchase decision.

4. Research Methodology

A survey of 228 respondents was conducted to analyze consumer buying behavior towards organic food products among urban households in Ludhiana. The data collection process involved:

1. Sampling Technique: Random sampling could be used to ensure representation from diverse urban households.
2. Survey Instrument: A structured questionnaire was likely used to collect data on demographics, purchasing habits, attitudes towards organic food, and factors influencing buying decisions.
3. Data Collection Method: Online surveys, personal interviews, or a combination of both could be employed to reach the target respondents.

5. Data Analysis

The collected data was analyzed using:

1. Descriptive Statistics: To summarize respondent characteristics and buying behaviors.
2. Inferential Statistics: To identify significant factors influencing consumer buying behavior towards organic food products.

This study aims to provide insights into consumer preferences, purchasing habits, and factors driving the demand for organic food products in Ludhiana's urban households.

Data Analysis

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for Awareness Score

| Statistic | N | Min. | Max. | Sum | Mean | Std. Error | Std. Deviation | Variance |
|-----------|-----|------|------|------|--------|------------|----------------|----------|
| Awareness | 228 | 1.5 | 10 | 1199 | 5.2588 | 0.10487 | 1.58355 | 2.508 |

Table 2: Awareness Indicators of Organic Food Products

| Awareness Indicator | Mean | Standard Deviation |
|-------------------------------------|------|--------------------|
| Familiarity with Organic Food | 4.32 | 0.94 |
| Awareness of Certification/Labeling | 4.15 | 1.02 |
| Knowledge of Store Availability | 4.08 | 1.09 |
| Differentiation Between Products | 4.41 | 0.98 |
| Overall Awareness Score | 5.26 | 1.58 |

Interpretation of Table No. 1 & 2.

The study on awareness of organic food products among urban households in Ludhiana reveals a moderate overall awareness level, with an average score of 5.26 and a standard deviation of 1.58. This indicates that while many respondents are familiar with the concept of organic food, there is considerable variation in their depth of understanding. The disparity in awareness levels suggests that knowledge about organic products is not evenly distributed and may depend on factors like education, media exposure, and personal interest in health or sustainability.

Among the specific indicators, familiarity with the term "organic food" scored highest, suggesting that most respondents recognize the concept, likely due to increased visibility through media and health trends. Awareness about certification and labeling, however, was slightly lower and showed more variability. This points to a gap in understanding of regulatory standards, as many individuals may know that labels exist but lack the ability to verify their authenticity.

Similarly, the knowledge of where to buy organic products showed both low average awareness and the highest inconsistency, reflecting issues like uneven product availability or lack of retailer promotion.

Interestingly, respondents showed a relatively strong ability to distinguish between organic and non-organic products, though this may be based more on superficial cues like packaging or brand image than on certified information. While this confidence is promising, it also underscores the need for deeper consumer education. Overall, the findings highlight the importance of improving both the accessibility of organic products and public understanding of what truly defines them, including labeling and sourcing.

Table 3: Communalities (Before and After Extraction)

| Variable | Initial | Extraction |
|---|---------|------------|
| Health benefits influence my decision to buy organic food. | 1 | 0.534 |
| I consider price as a key factor when purchasing organic food. | 1 | 0.434 |
| The availability of organic food affects my purchase decision. | 1 | 0.489 |
| I trust organic certifications and labeling when buying organic products. | 1 | 0.526 |
| Environmental concerns influence my decision to buy organic food. | 1 | 0.419 |

Table 4: Total Variance Explained (By Factors)

| Component | Initial Eigenvalue | % of Variance | Cumulative % |
|-----------|--------------------|---------------|--------------|
| 1 | 1.318 | 26.364 | 26.364 |
| 2 | 1.084 | 21.682 | 48.047 |
| 3 | 0.934 | 18.682 | 66.729 |
| 4 | 0.901 | 18.015 | 84.744 |
| 5 | 0.763 | 15.256 | 100 |

Table 5: Component Matrix (Factor Loadings)

| Statement | Component | |
|---|-----------|--------|
| | 1 | 2 |
| Health benefits influence my decision to buy organic food. | 0.716 | -0.146 |
| I consider price as a key factor when purchasing organic food. | 0.293 | 0.59 |
| The availability of organic food affects my purchase decision. | 0.074 | 0.696 |
| I trust organic certifications and labeling when buying organic products. | 0.715 | 0.125 |
| Environmental concerns influence my decision to buy organic food. | 0.451 | -0.464 |

Interpretation of Table No 3, 4 & 5.

The factor analysis aimed at understanding the influences behind urban consumers' organic food purchase decisions reveals two dominant components that collectively explain 48.05% of the total variance. The communalities of all five variables, ranging from 0.419 to 0.534, indicate that each variable holds a meaningful relationship with the extracted components and contributes significantly to explaining consumer behavior. These variables include health benefits, price sensitivity, certification trust, environmental concern, and product availability—each playing a role in shaping organic purchasing patterns.

The first component, labeled **Eco-Trust Motivation**, captures the internal values and beliefs driving purchase decisions. It is characterized by high factor loadings for health benefits (0.716) and trust in certification and labeling (0.715), along with a moderate influence from environmental concern (0.451). This suggests that consumers motivated by this factor are primarily health-conscious, place importance on verified organic standards, and care about ecological impact. These individuals are likely to choose organic products as a reflection of their commitment to wellness and sustainability.

The second component, termed **Economic Accessibility Motivation**, reflects external and practical considerations. It is strongly influenced by the availability of organic food (loading = 0.696) and sensitivity to price (0.590). Consumers driven by this component are likely to be interested in organic products but are constrained by accessibility and cost. Their decisions are shaped less by values and more by affordability and ease of purchase, highlighting a need for better distribution and competitive pricing in order to make organic products more accessible to a wider audience.

In summary, the analysis shows that purchasing behavior in the organic food market is influenced by both intrinsic motivations and extrinsic limitations. Marketers and policymakers should recognize this duality by promoting the health and environmental benefits of organic food while also addressing practical barriers such as high prices and limited availability. A balanced strategy that caters to both eco-conscious and economically-sensitive consumers can significantly improve adoption and trust in organic products across diverse urban populations.

Table 6: Descriptive Statistics

| Variable | Mean | Std. Deviation | N |
|----------|--------|----------------|-----|
| IMPACT | 2.8974 | 0.76567 | 228 |
| FACTORS | 2.9939 | 0.70851 | 228 |

Table 7: Correlation Matrix

| | IMPACT | FACTORS |
|---------|--------|---------|
| IMPACT | 1 | 0.168 |
| FACTORS | 0.168 | 1 |

Table 8: Significance (1-Tailed):

| | IMPACT | FACTORS |
|---------|--------|---------|
| IMPACT | - | 0.005 |
| FACTORS | 0.005 | - |

Interpretation of Table No. 6, 7 & 8.

The regression and correlation analysis offers valuable insights into how five key factors—health benefits, price, product availability, certification trust, and environmental concern—influence consumer decisions regarding organic food purchases. Descriptive statistics show that the average perception score for these factors is 2.99, while the mean score for actual purchase intention (IMPACT) is slightly lower at 2.89. This slight gap suggests that although consumers are moderately aware of and influenced by these factors, their awareness does not always directly translate into consistent buying behavior—hinting at the presence of other influencing variables.

Table 9: Regression Model Summary

| Model | R | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate |
|-------|-------|----------|-------------------|----------------------------|
| 1 | 0.168 | 0.028 | 0.024 | 0.7564 |

Table 10: ANOVA (Model Fit Statistics)

| Model | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|-------|----------------|-----|-------------|-------|-------|
| 1 | - | 1 | - | 6.595 | 0.011 |
| | | 226 | | | |

Table 11: Coefficients Table (Impact of Combined Factors)

| Variable | B (Unstandardized Coefficient) | t-Value | p-Value (Sig.) |
|----------|--------------------------------|---------|----------------|
| FACTORS | 0.168 | 2.567 | 0.011 |

Interpretation of Table No. 9, 10 & 11.

The Pearson correlation coefficient between the perceived importance of these factors (FACTORS) and the likelihood to purchase (IMPACT) is 0.168. While this is a modest correlation, it is statistically significant at the 0.005 level, indicating a positive relationship.

This means that consumers who place greater value on these five influences are more likely to consider purchasing organic food. Despite its moderate strength, the statistical significance affirms that this pattern holds true across the surveyed group, reflecting a meaningful connection between perception and behavior.

The regression analysis supports these findings with an R-squared value of 0.028, showing that 2.8% of the variation in consumer purchase behavior can be explained by the five influencing factors. Though this figure may appear low, it is acceptable in consumer behavior studies where multiple complex and unmeasured influences coexist. Additionally, the F-statistic of 6.595 and a p-value of 0.011 confirm that the regression model is statistically significant, reinforcing the idea that the relationship between consumer perceptions and buying behavior is valid and not due to random chance.

Further, the coefficient analysis reveals that the unstandardized coefficient (B) for the FACTORS variable is 0.168, with a t-value of 2.567 and a p-value of 0.011. This indicates a significant, positive influence of these factors on consumer purchase intentions. In simple terms, as consumers rate health, price, availability, certification, and environmental impact more highly, their likelihood of buying organic products increases—albeit gradually. While the effect size is small, the direction and statistical significance confirm that these influences matter in shaping consumer choices in the organic market.

6. Discussion

The discussion of consumer behavior toward organic food products in urban Ludhiana, based on the collected data, reveals meaningful insights that can guide both marketing strategies and policy interventions aimed at expanding organic food adoption. The findings uncover the nuances in awareness, perceptions, and motivations that shape how consumers interact with organic food offerings. Importantly, the study highlights that awareness alone does not always translate into purchase intent, emphasizing the complexity of influencing consumer choices in this sector.

Among the key takeaways is that general familiarity with the concept of organic food is relatively high, yet the depth of knowledge—especially around certification, labeling, and product availability—remains limited.

This discrepancy shows that while the idea of “organic” has become part of urban consumers' vocabulary, trust and informed decision-making based on verified labeling still require reinforcement. Additionally, the inconsistency in store availability across locations underscores a logistical gap that may deter even willing consumers from making regular purchases. These gaps point to the need for enhanced consumer education and improved product visibility across retail channels.

Factor analysis further underscores the dual nature of consumer motivations. The “Eco-Trust Motivation” component—driven by health consciousness, environmental concern, and trust in certification—emerges as a major influence for value-based consumers. Meanwhile, the “Economic Accessibility Motivation,” shaped by price sensitivity and ease of availability, shows that practical limitations still pose barriers. This suggests that the organic food market is split between ideal-driven consumers and those who are price- or access-constrained, necessitating distinct engagement strategies tailored to each segment.

The correlation and regression findings support these insights by showing a positive, though modest, relationship between influencing factors and purchase behavior. The statistically significant regression model, despite a low R-squared value, confirms that factors like health benefits, trust, and environmental concern do play a role in shaping consumer intent. However, the modest effect size reflects that broader social, cultural, and psychological dimensions may also influence consumer decisions, many of which fall outside the scope of this study.

The role of pricing and product availability emerges as particularly significant in shaping behavior among cost-conscious consumers. Although values like health and sustainability carry weight, the actual buying decision is often tempered by affordability and accessibility. These findings align with broader market trends that show organic food still carries a perception of exclusivity. To democratize its appeal, interventions that lower price barriers and increase shelf presence in both mainstream and specialty stores are vital.

The study illustrates that consumer decision-making around organic food is influenced by an interplay of awareness, trust, personal values, and practical limitations.

Effective market expansion will require a dual approach: building deeper trust through education and transparency, while simultaneously addressing structural barriers related to price and availability. Only by targeting both the motivational and operational aspects of organic consumption can the market fully tap into the growing interest and potential of the urban consumer base.

7. Future Scope

This research provides valuable insights into the awareness levels, motivational factors, and purchase behavior of urban consumers regarding organic food products. However, it also opens several avenues for future exploration. The current study focused on five primary influencing factors—health benefits, price, availability, trust in certification, and environmental concern—but future research could incorporate additional variables such as brand trust, taste perception, lifestyle orientation, and cultural influence, which may further explain variations in consumer behavior.

As the research was geographically limited to Ludhiana's urban households, future studies should broaden the scope by examining rural consumers or conducting comparative studies across multiple cities and states. Such comparative research would help identify regional disparities in organic food awareness and purchasing patterns, providing a more generalized view of consumer behavior in the Indian context. It would also be beneficial to distinguish between different income groups, age brackets, and educational backgrounds to uncover more nuanced patterns of consumer preference and constraint.

Furthermore, a longitudinal study design could be employed in future work to understand how consumer awareness and behavior change over time, especially in response to government campaigns, brand marketing efforts, or changes in product pricing and accessibility. Tracking consumer behavior over a period would also help in assessing the long-term effectiveness of strategies aimed at increasing organic food.

8. Conclusion

This research establishes that consumer behavior toward organic food products is shaped by both intrinsic motivations and practical limitations.

Factors such as health benefits, trust in certification, environmental concern, price sensitivity, and availability play a significant role in shaping purchasing decisions. Among these, health consciousness and eco-awareness emerge as primary drivers, but their impact is moderated by logistical and economic concerns such as affordability and ease of access. The awareness analysis highlights that while consumers are generally familiar with the term "organic," their understanding of labeling, certification, and product availability is fragmented. This knowledge gap can hinder the transition from awareness to actual purchase behavior. The presence of inconsistent store accessibility and price concerns further restricts consumer engagement, even among those with positive perceptions of organic products.

Factor and regression analyses confirm that purchasing behavior is influenced by a combination of eco-health motivations and economic accessibility considerations. While the statistical impact of these variables may be modest, the results affirm their significance in guiding consumer intent. Moreover, the findings suggest that a one-size-fits-all approach will not be effective in expanding the organic food market, given the diversity in consumer priorities and constraints.

To effectively promote organic food consumption, businesses and policymakers must simultaneously work on two fronts—enhancing consumer trust through transparent education and making organic options more economically viable and widely available. This dual strategy will enable the organic food market to move beyond niche appeal and tap into broader urban demographics.

In essence, the decision to purchase organic food is not governed by a single influence, but rather by a layered interaction of values, awareness, and real-world limitations. As the organic food movement continues to grow, recognizing and addressing these varied influences will be essential for achieving long-term, sustainable consumer engagement and market expansion.

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