

# A Study on Purchase Behaviour of Consumer towards Organic Products with Special Reference to Southern Kerala Districts

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**ABSTRACT:** Consumer preferences for organic products have been greatly impacted by the growing global knowledge of health, environmental sustainability, and ethical consumerism. Consumers who are concerned about their health and the environment are increasingly choosing organic products, which are defined by their natural farming practices and lack of artificial chemicals. Within this framework, the current research investigates consumer purchasing patterns for organic products, with a particular emphasis on Kerala's southern regions. Understanding the elements that encourage or impede the purchase of organic products is made easier in these areas because of their high literacy rates, traditional farming methods, and cultural propensity for natural and organic consumption. The study uses a mixed-methods approach, collecting data from a range of regional demographic groups through in-depth interviews and standardized questionnaires. Results show that purchasing organic products is most driven by worries about one's health, then perceived quality and environmental impact. But greater adoption is hampered by obstacles including increased costs, restricted availability, and ignorance. Consumer purchasing behaviour is greatly influenced by demographic parameters such as age, income, and education. Regional factors also impact customer behaviour, such as cultural norms and specific market conditions. Because they are more readily available and more widely known, urban areas have higher adoption rates than rural ones. The report makes recommendations for tactics to increase the use of organic products, such as competitive price, increased availability, and focused awareness efforts, all of which will eventually support southern Kerala's sustainable development.

**Keywords:** Consumer behaviour, Organic products, Health consciousness, Purchase decision, Southern Kerala, Sustainability, Market dynamics, Awareness, Sustainable development.

## INTRODUCTION

Organic or green products are becoming more and more popular as a result of a major movement in consumer behaviour in recent years toward more

environmentally friendly and sustainable options. The goal of these items is to reduce negative effects on the environment, human health, and animal welfare by using natural components and environmentally friendly production techniques. Growing awareness of the advantages of minimizing synthetic chemicals and conserving natural resources has led to a significant increase in the demand for organic products. Generally speaking, organic products are distinguished by their production process, which refrains from using artificial fertilizers, pesticides, genetically modified organisms (GMOs), and other chemicals. The objective is to produce and grow goods in a way that respects the environment, guaranteeing biodiversity, soil fertility, and ecological equilibrium. Conversely, green products cover a wider variety of goods that emphasize sustainability in a number of ways, such as using renewable energy, recyclable packaging, or having low carbon emissions throughout the course of the product's lifecycle.

A number of factors, such as growing health concerns, environmental awareness, and governmental actions supporting sustainable development, have contributed to the appeal of organic and green products. In addition to seeking out safer and healthier options, consumers are also driven by a desire to support moral production and consumption methods. Because of this, the market for these products has grown to encompass eco-friendly cosmetics, organic apparel, biodegradable household goods, and more in addition to food items. Nonetheless, there are still issues with the advertising and uptake of green products. Barriers to broad acceptance may include things like increased costs, restricted supply, and disparate certification requirements. However, there is a growing trend toward sustainable and organic consumerism, motivated by the idea that choosing products that are good for the environment will help create a healthier planet and future generations. The growing popularity of green and organic products is a reflection of the

global movement toward sustainable development and mindful consumerism. A more sustainable future is anticipated as the demand for organic and green products continues to grow as more people and companies realize how important it is to include environmental and social responsibility into their operations and lifestyles.

Kerala's southern districts, which are renowned for their agricultural past and strong propensity for sustainable living, offer a distinctive environment for studying consumer behaviour in the organic sector. Organic products, such as food items, personal care items, and household goods, have gradually become more accessible and well-liked in the area. Businesses, governments, and researchers must all comprehend the elements influencing customers' purchasing decisions toward organic products as they grow more environmentally concerned and health conscious in these districts. Businesses aiming to capitalize on the rising demand for organic products will benefit greatly from the research's insights into the local market dynamics and consumer preferences, which are provided by its focus on the districts of southern Kerala. Additionally, it will assist legislators in formulating plans to encourage sustainable consumption and assist regional organic farming projects. This study helps to better understand how Keralan consumers are becoming more interested in organic products and how the state's organic industry might grow as the state continues to adopt a more sustainable way of life.

Consumer interest in green or organic products has significantly increased as a result of growing concerns about environmental sustainability and health consciousness. These products are thought to be safer, healthier, and more sustainable than traditional products since they prioritize natural ingredients and environmentally friendly production techniques. Understanding how customers buy these things has therefore emerged as a crucial field of study, assisting in the discovery of the elements, preferences, and motivations influencing consumers' decision-making. Numerous factors, such as environmental consciousness, health concerns, social influence, product features, and pricing, influence consumers' purchasing decisions regarding green or organic items. Customers are more inclined to look for products that reduce damage to the environment, such as those that are sustainably sourced, organically manufactured, or have little packaging, if they are more conscious of how their decisions affect the environment.

Additionally, because organic products are thought to include fewer artificial chemicals and additives than conventional ones, people who are worried about their health and well-being are frequently drawn to them. In addition to providing important insights for businesses and regulators, research on consumer purchasing patterns related to green or organic products also illuminates the shifting dynamics of consumer markets. Businesses can utilize this information to better match consumer expectations with their marketing plans, product offerings, and CSR actions. In order to create rules and incentives that promote sustainable consumption, authorities might benefit from knowing how consumers behave toward green items. Fostering a sustainable market landscape requires investigating the variables that encourage or impede the purchase of green or organic items, as the demand for eco-friendly products keeps rising. A larger cultural movement toward more sustainable living is reflected in this change toward environmentally conscious consumption, so studying consumer behaviour is essential to reaching long-term economic and environmental objectives.

#### STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The demand for organic products is rising as people become more conscious of environmental sustainability and health issues. Nevertheless, little is known about the precise elements influencing Southern Keralan consumers' purchasing decisions, despite the growing demand for organic goods. Compared to other regions, the region's distinct sociocultural and economic features might have a varied impact on consumer attitudes, awareness, and willingness to pay for organic products. Furthermore, the cost of organic products is frequently higher than that of conventional equivalents, which could prevent their broad use. Promoting organic products more successfully requires an understanding of the factors that influence customer purchasing decisions, such as perceived advantages and difficulties. In order to close this gap, this study looks at how consumers in Southern Kerala districts make purchases of organic goods, identifies important factors that affect their choices, and offers advice to businesses and policymakers on how to promote the region's adoption of organic products.

#### OBJECTIVES

1. To assess the level of awareness and knowledge among consumers regarding organic products.

2. To analyse the factors influencing the purchase behaviour of consumers towards organic products in Southern Kerala districts.
3. To evaluate the willingness to pay a premium for organic products among consumers in the region.
4. To provide recommendations for businesses and marketers to promote organic products effectively in Southern Kerala.

#### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

K.D.L.R. Kapuge (2016) K.D.L.R. Kapuge carried out a study to investigate how awareness, reference group influence, environmental concern, and health consciousness affect the intention to buy organic food. The researcher discovered that the two most important criteria were awareness and health consciousness, and that these characteristics significantly improved the intention to buy organic food. The author examined the degree to which each particular component affected purchase intention using a Multiple Linear Regression Model. It was discovered that the two most important criteria were awareness and health consciousness, which had a significant beneficial influence on the intention to buy organic food. The intention of Sri Lankan consumers to purchase organic food items, however, does not appear to be much impacted by environmental concerns or the influence of reference groups.

D. Suryachandra Rao, Dr. K. Chiranjeevi and Dasari Pandurangarao (2016) Over 75% of the consumers who responded to the poll said that people's attitudes toward organic food items were mediocre. According to the data analysis and findings, customers' socioeconomic traits and attitudes varied significantly in the direction of organic food items. According to the study, there is a rise in market for these goods. Both consumers and advertisers have a lot of potential if the customers are informed about the advantages for the environment and other aspects of organic food items. Positive customer attitudes will result in a greater degree of intention to buy. Consequently, the study found a favourable correlation between sentiment and intention to buy organic food items.

Tung, S., Shih, C., Wei, S. and Chen, Y. (2012) The purpose of the study was to investigate Taiwanese consumers' inconsistent attitudes on organic food and agriculture and how these attitudes relate to their willingness to pay more for organic goods. According to this study, women in their 40s who have greater levels of education, a more prestigious job, and a

favorable view of the need for organic farming are more likely to pay more for and purchase organic food. An attitude discrepancy regarding organic agriculture and food was revealed by the majority of respondents' high level of concern about pesticides and low level of faith in organic food. Customers' willingness to spend more and make a purchase is mostly determined by their degree of faith, which is influenced by their worries about the usage of pesticides.

Yadav, R., & Pathak, G. S. (2016). The purpose of this study was to investigate Indian consumers' intentions to buy organic food items. Ajzen and Fishbein's Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) was applied in this context. Other constructs such as moral attitude, health repercussions, and even environmental concern were incorporated in the study. Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) was performed to examine the degree of relationship between each construct. The study came to the conclusion that the TPB did not support a comprehensive analysis of consumers' intentions to purchase organic food products. It provided some partial support. Further analysis of the components revealed that health consciousness and moral attitude positively influenced the propensity to buy organic food products. The predictive ability of the framework suggested in the study to ascertain customers' intentions to purchase organic food products was enhanced by the addition of more constructs.

Fotopoulos, C. and Chryssochoidis, G. (2001). The psychological and socioeconomic elements influencing consumers' attitudes toward buying organic food items were highlighted in this study. Psychometric techniques served as the foundation for this analytical study. Regression analysis was performed to examine the significance of each component influencing consumers' attitudes toward buying organic food goods. The most significant element influencing the actual purchase of organic food, according to the data collected and analysed, was familiarity with organic food products, which was improved by knowing how organic food differed from conventional or non-organic food products. Put another way, customers who are well-informed on the distinctions between organic and non-organic foods are more likely to have a favourable opinion of organic food items. Furthermore, the study discovered that certifications and other crucial markings on these products are equally relevant.

Chen, M. F. (2007). The purpose of the study was to determine how regular organic food consumers (ROC) differed from occasional organic consumers (OOC). It was discovered that the general reasons behind the food choices of the two customer groups differ. Compared to ROC, it was discovered that the OOCs placed a far higher value on price, convenience, and calorie content while placing a much lower value on factors like environmental protection, food security, and animal welfare. Additionally, compared to ROC, OOC expected higher costs, fewer options, no increase in vitamins, and no improvement in taste when it came to the consequences of eating organic food. Lastly, OOC displayed a less positive attitude, weakened social norms, and lower intentions to regularly purchase organic food in the future. They also placed less importance on environmental protection in their lives. Lastly, OOC uses a wider range of stores and prefers various grocery stores than ROC.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research methodology for the study titled "A Study on Purchase Behaviour of Consumers Towards Organic Products with Special Reference to Southern Kerala Districts" outlines the systematic approach to collecting and analysing data to achieve the research objectives. This section details the research design, data collection methods, sampling techniques, data analysis tools, and limitations of the study.

**Research Design:** The study employs a descriptive research design to explore and understand the factors influencing consumer purchase behaviour towards organic products in the southern districts of Kerala. The descriptive design is suitable for this research as it aims to identify the patterns, preferences, and attitudes of consumers while providing insights into the variables affecting their buying decisions.

**Study Area:** The research focuses on the southern districts of Kerala, which include Thiruvananthapuram, Kollam, Pathanamthitta, Alappuzha, Kottayam, and Idukki. These districts have been selected due to their diverse demographic characteristics, cultural inclination towards natural living, and emerging market for organic products.

### Sampling Techniques

a. **Target Population:** The target population for this study includes consumers who purchase organic

products in the southern districts of Kerala. The population comprises individuals from various demographic backgrounds, including different age groups, income levels, education levels, and lifestyles.

b. **Sampling Method:** A non-probability sampling technique, specifically convenience sampling, will be used to select respondents for the survey. This method is chosen due to the ease of accessing consumers in retail stores, organic markets, supermarkets, and online platforms that sell organic products.

c. **Sample Size:** The sample size for the study will be 300 respondents, selected from the different southern districts to ensure adequate representation. The sample size has been determined to provide sufficient data for statistical analysis while considering time and resource constraints.

### Data Collection Methods

a. **Primary Data Collection:** Primary data will be collected through a structured questionnaire administered to the selected respondents. The questionnaire will include both closed-ended and open-ended questions to gather information on various factors. The questionnaire will be pretested with a small sample to ensure clarity and reliability before conducting the full-scale survey.

b. **Secondary Data Collection:** Secondary data will be gathered from various sources, such as academic journals, research reports, government publications, and online databases. This information will help provide context to the study and support the analysis of primary data by offering insights into trends, market conditions, and previous research findings related to organic products.

**Data Analysis Tools and Techniques:** The collected data will be analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. Descriptive statistics, such as frequencies, percentages, and mean values, will be used to summarize the demographic characteristics and buying behaviour of respondents. Inferential statistical tools, such as chi-square tests, t-tests, and regression analysis, will be employed to identify relationships between demographic variables and purchase behaviour, and to test the significance of various influencing factors.

### Limitations of the Study

- The use of convenience sampling may not ensure complete representativeness of the entire population in the southern Kerala districts.
- The findings may be subject to biases, such as social desirability bias, as respondents might overstate their interest in organic products.
- The study focuses on consumers in the southern districts of Kerala, and the results may not be generalizable to other regions.

#### DATA ANALYSIS, INTERPRETATION AND FINDINGS

The following statistical tools were used to group, modify, tabulate, and analyze the obtained data in a master table.

- Percentage Analysis
- Chi-Square Test

#### SIMPLE PERCENTAGE ANALYSIS

For the majority of the questionnaire's items, a straightforward percentage analysis is performed. The classification of respondents falling into each category is described in this analysis. The primary purpose of the percentage analysis is standardization, and the analysis is supported by comparisons.

#### FORMULA:

$$\text{Percentage Analysis} = \frac{\text{No. of Respondents}}{\text{Total No. of Respondents}} * 100$$

TABLE 1

Sl. No.	Variables	Categories	Number of Respondents	Percentage
1.	Gender	Male Female	189 111	63 37
2.	Age	Below 20 years 20 years -35 years 35 years -50 years Above 50 years	47 113 81 59	15 38 27 20
3.	Education	Under school level School level College level Technical level	17 45 160 78	6 15 53 26
4.	Monthly income	Below 20000 20000-25000 25000-30000 Above 30000	30 105 99 66	10 35 33 22
5.	Type of organic product purchased	Food products Cosmetics Medicine Clothes	135 95 62 8	45 32 21 2
6.	How often do you buy green product	Regularly Occasionally Rarely	79 137 84	26 46 28
7.	Person influencing to purchase of organic product	Family Self Doctor Friends /colleagues	64 87 78 71	21 29 26 24
8.	Reasons for buying organic product	Maintain good health Protect environment Quality of product Prefer the taste	146 49 93 12	49 16 31 4
9.	Amount spent on buying the product	Below 2000 2000-3500 3500-5000	75 87 105	25 29 35

		Above 5000	33	11
10.	Organic shopping place	Super markets	94	31
		Organic shops	62	21
		Open/street market	68	23
		General grocery shops	76	25
11.	Recommend to family /friends	Yes	286	95
		No	14	5

Source: Primary Data

#### INTERPRETATION

1. According to the table above, 37% of the sample's respondents are women and 63% of them are men.

2. The chart explains that the bulk of respondents are between the ages of 20 and 35, which translates to 38% and 27% of respondents being between the ages of 35 and 50, 20% being over 50, and only 15% being under 20.

3. According to the above table, the majority of respondents—53 percent—have college-level education, with 26 percent having received technical level education qualifications, 15 percent having school-level education, and 6 percent being below school level.

4. The table indicate that respondent's monthly income 10% of respondent's income below 20000 and 35% of respondents' income range from 20000-25000 and 33% of respondents' monthly income range from 25000-30000 and 22% of the respondent's monthly income is above 30000

5. The respondents' preferred organic product types are shown in the table. 32% of respondents buy organic cosmetics, 21% use organic medications, 45% of respondents buy food goods, and only 2% buy organic clothing.

6. The frequency of organic product purchases by the respondents is shown in the above table. 26% of respondents buy organic items on a regular basis, 28% buy them infrequently, and the majority buy organic products occasionally.

7. The individuals affecting the buying of organic products are explained in the above table. 26

percent of respondents buy organic items on their own initiative, while 21 percent are influenced by family, 24 percent are affected by friends or coworkers, and 26 percent are influenced by a doctor's suggestion.

8. According to the table above, there are several reasons to purchase organic goods. The majority of respondents 49% buy organic products to maintain their health, 16% do so with the intention of protecting the environment, 31% do so for the product's quality, and 4% do so for its flavour.

9. The above table indicate that the amount spent on buying the organic products. 25% of respondents spent only below 2000 and 29% of respondents spent the amount range between 2000-3000 and 35% were spent 3500-5000 and 11% of respondents sent above 5000 rupees for buying organic products.

10. The table indicates the location of the organic product's purchase. Of the respondents, 31% buy organic products from super markets, 21% from organic stores, 23% from open or street markets, and 25% from regular grocery stores.

11. The aforementioned table shows that 95% of respondents prefer to recommend organic products to others, while 5% do not.

#### CHI SQUARE TEST

The following table shows the chi square test results.

Hypothesis: There is no significant relationship between monthly income and amount spent of organic products.

Chi square test: Association between monthly income and amount spent of organic products

Amount spent Monthly income	Below Rs.2000	Rs 2000- Rs 3500	Rs 3500- Rs 5000	Above Rs 5000	Total
Below Rs.20000	15(7.50)	3(8.70)	9(10.50)	3(3.30)	30
Rs 20000- Rs 25000	21(26.25)	33(30.45)	45(36.75)	6(11.55)	105
Rs 25000- Rs 30000	21(24.75)	33(28.71)	33(34.65)	15(10.89)	99

Above Rs 30000	18(16.50)	18(19.14)	18(23.10)	9(7.26)	66
Total	75	87	105	33	300
Calculated value					24.483
Table value					16.919
Degree of freedom					9
Level of significance					5%
Significate /non-significant					Significant

Expected frequencies are given in the bracket.

## INTERPRETATION

The calculated value is greater than the table value, so the null hypothesis is rejected. hence there is a significant relationship between monthly income and amount spent of organic products.

## SUGGESTIONS

- **Enhance Consumer Awareness and Education:** To educate customers about the health and environmental advantages of organic products, businesses and government organizations should launch awareness campaigns and educational initiatives. Educate customers on the advantages of organic products for their health and the environment by holding workshops, webinars, and community gatherings. Conduct awareness campaigns outlining the distinctions between conventional and organic products using television, local newspapers, and social media. Stores should post explanatory materials about the organic product certification and quality control procedures. This can improve understanding and have a favourable impact on buying decisions.
- **Offer Competitive Pricing and Discounts:** Businesses could think about implementing competitive pricing methods, such discounts, seasonal offers, or loyalty programs, to lower the cost of organic products, as they are more expensive. This could assist draw in budget-conscious customers. Promote tax breaks or government subsidies for organic farmers in order to lower production costs and retail prices. Retailers can lower the cost of organic items by offering special promotions or bundle discounts. To create direct supply chains and reduce the expense of middlemen, collaborate with nearby organic farms.
- **Target Niche Markets and Demographics:** Targeting particular consumer demographics that are more inclined to purchase organic products such as young professionals, families with children, or health-conscious individuals should be the focus of marketing campaigns. Marketing initiatives can be more successful if one is aware of these groups' inclinations.

- **Develop Online Platforms for Organic Products:** E-commerce platforms focused on organic products can help reach a broader audience. Creating user-friendly online stores with home delivery options can cater to the growing demand for convenient shopping experiences.
- **Improve Availability and Accessibility:** The goal of retailers and distributors should be to increase the accessibility of organic products, particularly in Southern Kerala's rural and semi-urban areas. More customers may choose to purchase organic goods if local businesses and supermarkets set up special sections for them. Make sure that stores have a lot of organic products on display, with special aisles or shelves for easy access. Increase the reach of organic products to rural and small-town regions where supply can be scarce. Create organic product-focused online marketplaces with delivery options to expand your customer base.
- **Strengthen Certification and Labelling Practices:** Consumer trust can be increased by organic products having clear labels and certification. Making sure that items are certified by established organic standards would encourage educated purchasing decisions and lessen consumer distrust. Enhance labelling procedures to make it easier for customers to recognize authentic organic products by clearly indicating organic certification and other pertinent product information. To foster confidence and reduce misunderstanding regarding the veracity of organic claims, make sure that products fulfil established organic certification requirements. Inform customers on the meaning of certified organic labels and how to spot them.
- **Support Local Organic Farming and Direct Consumer-Farmer Connections:** Encouraging local farmers to use organic agricultural methods can shorten the supply chain and lower the price of organic products. Providing local farmers with incentives, training, and subsidies can increase the region's output of organic goods. Promote farmer's markets and community-supported agriculture (CSA) initiatives that let customers purchase organic goods straight

from growers. The availability and quality of organic products can be improved by offering farmers assistance and training in organic agricultural methods. Highlight the advantages of using fresh, locally sourced food and support farm-to-table programs that connect customers with nearby organic farms.

- **Conduct Regular Market Research and Address Misconceptions About Organic Products:** In the market for organic products, it is necessary to conduct ongoing market research to stay abreast of shifting customer trends and preferences. This will enable companies to modify their plans in order to successfully satisfy changing customer needs. Dispel the myth that organic products are reserved for affluent or niche consumers by emphasizing their advantages for people from a variety of socioeconomic backgrounds. Dispute sceptic's by highlighting research or testimonies that demonstrate the advantages of organic products for the environment and human health. Address consumers' worries over the shelf life of organic products by teaching them appropriate storage techniques.

## CONCLUSION

The research on the purchasing patterns of consumers in the districts of Southern Kerala with regard to organic products has provided insight into the factors that influence the demand for organic products as well as the changing trends in consumer preferences. It emphasizes how growing environmental concerns and health consciousness are driving the market for organic products, but a number of obstacles still stand in the way of their wider acceptance. For stakeholders hoping to expand the market for organic products in the area, it is essential to comprehend these obstacles as well as the elements affecting consumer behaviour. The results of the study show that demographic variables like age, income, education, and lifestyle have a big impact on what people buy. Because they are more aware of the health advantages and environmental sustainability of organic products, younger consumers, those in higher income brackets, and those with higher levels of education are more likely to buy them. Nevertheless, a significant obstacle still exists because organic products are more expensive than conventional ones. Price is still a major factor for many customers, and they are hesitant to spend more for organic products, particularly when the benefits are unclear or they have concerns about the legitimacy of organic labelling. The significance of trust in influencing consumer perceptions of organic

products is also emphasized by the study. There is doubt over the veracity of organic claims as a result of the absence of uniform and open labelling procedures. Many customers have trouble telling the difference between products with false labels and those that are actually certified organic, which influences their choice to buy. To increase consumer confidence, certification and labelling standards must be strengthened.

In order to encourage the use of organic products, these obstacles must be removed using focused tactics such raising consumer knowledge, enhancing product availability, providing competitive price, and guaranteeing label transparency. Consumer confidence can be increased and expenses can be decreased by promoting local organic farming and establishing direct connections between farmers and consumers. The study emphasizes the necessity of a multifaceted strategy to encourage Southern Keralans to consume organic food. The market for organic products can be greatly increased by resolving concerns about cost, accessibility, and trust as well as by raising consumer awareness. In addition to helping consumers lead better lives, these initiatives will support environmental sustainability and the expansion of the regional organic agricultural industry. Stakeholders can use the study's conclusions and recommendations as a guide to develop a more thriving and easily accessible organic product market in the area.

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