



## An empirical study of consumer buying behaviour towards organic food products in Karnataka

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### Abstract

In the wake of rising health concerns and environmental awareness, the consumption of organic food products has gained significant attention in India, particularly in Karnataka. This study aims to empirically examine the factors influencing consumer buying behaviour towards organic food in select cities of Karnataka. The research is highly relevant in the present scenario where consumers are increasingly shifting towards healthier and sustainable food choices. A descriptive research design was employed, using primary data collected through a structured questionnaire based on a 5-point Likert scale. A total of 250 respondents from Mysuru, Bengaluru, Mangaluru, Hassan, and Mandya participated in the study. Statistical tools such as descriptive statistics, ANOVA, and regression analysis were applied to analyse the data. The findings revealed that health consciousness, nutritional belief, trust in certification, and product availability significantly influence consumer buying behaviour, while price sensitivity negatively affects it. Environmental awareness, although theoretically important, showed limited direct impact. The study highlights demographic variations, particularly in age, income, and regional access. The research provides valuable insights for marketers and policymakers to enhance organic food accessibility and affordability. Future studies may focus on rural consumer patterns and long-term behavioural changes.

**Keywords:** Organic food, consumer behaviour, health consciousness, karnataka, buying decision

### Introduction

In recent years, consumer preferences in India have witnessed a significant shift towards healthier and more sustainable food choices, with organic food products gaining substantial attention. Organic foods, grown without synthetic pesticides, fertilizers, or genetically modified organisms, are increasingly perceived as healthier and environmentally friendly alternatives. According to the India Organic Food Market Overview 2024 [2], the Indian organic food market is expected to grow at a CAGR of over 20% between 2020 and 2026, driven by rising health awareness, increasing disposable incomes, and growing environmental concerns. Karnataka, being one of the leading states in organic farming, contributes significantly to this emerging sector. With a strong agricultural base and supportive government policies like the Organic Farming Policy of Karnataka, the state has become a key player in organic production and consumption, making it a relevant region for examining consumer behaviour in this context.

Despite the increasing popularity of organic food, consumer buying behaviour remains complex and influenced by various socio-economic, psychological, and cultural factors. Variables such as health consciousness, environmental awareness, income levels, availability, price sensitivity, and trust in certifications play a critical role in shaping purchase decisions. In Karnataka, urban areas like Bengaluru and Mysuru show a higher demand for organic products, whereas rural areas display moderate interest due to affordability and accessibility issues. This study aims to empirically investigate the underlying factors influencing consumer decisions towards organic food in Karnataka. The insights gained from this research are expected to contribute to the development of targeted marketing strategies, policy

initiatives, and awareness campaigns that promote sustainable consumption patterns across the state.

### Theoretical Background

Consumer buying behaviour refers to the decision-making processes and actions of individuals in purchasing goods and services, influenced by a combination of internal and external factors. The Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1991) is often used to understand consumer intentions and actual purchasing behaviour, especially in the context of environmentally responsible consumption such as organic food. This theory suggests that attitude towards the behaviour, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control collectively shape purchase intentions. In the case of organic food, consumers' positive attitudes stem from health benefits, safety concerns, and environmental consciousness. Karnataka, being among the top five states in organic food production (APEDA, 2023)<sup>[6]</sup>, provides a relevant setting to apply these theoretical constructs, as consumers in urban regions are increasingly motivated by such factors.

Another relevant framework is the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) model, which explains how external stimuli such as product labeling, availability, and promotional efforts influence internal psychological states (organism) leading to a behavioural response (purchase decision). In Karnataka, organic certification, visibility in retail stores, and consumer education campaigns act as external stimuli, influencing consumers' cognition and emotional associations with organic products. Studies have shown that Indian consumers are willing to pay a premium for organic products when trust in certification and quality is established. By applying these theoretical lenses, the present study seeks to analyze how individual motivations, societal influences, and external marketing efforts jointly impact the

buying behaviour of consumers in the organic food market of Karnataka.

**Review of Literature**

Septiani (2024) <sup>[1]</sup> found that health consciousness and perceived quality influence organic food purchases in Indonesia, while environmental awareness had no significant impact. Marokhu (2024) <sup>[2]</sup> emphasizes the role of youth and the Theory of Planned Behavior in shaping purchase intentions for organic food through attitudes and perceived behavioral control. Kifaya (2024) <sup>[3]</sup> highlights consumer skepticism as a barrier, with environmental knowledge helping mitigate doubts and improve purchase intentions for organic products. Srinath (2024) <sup>[4]</sup> projects India's organic market to grow rapidly but identifies pricing inefficiencies and lack of support services as major challenges to its expansion. Sanyal (2023) <sup>[5]</sup> shows that consumer expertise influences buying preferences and satisfaction, with gender differences also affecting organic food purchase behavior. Rushitha (2023) <sup>[6]</sup> reports that awareness, education, and income significantly influence organic food purchases in Nellore, though high prices and limited availability remain issues. Dudziak (2022) <sup>[7]</sup> highlights price and consumer skepticism as key barriers in Poland, stressing the importance of labeling and education for wider adoption. Reddy (2022) <sup>[8]</sup> discusses the PKVY scheme's economic impact, finding that organic farming lowers costs but reduces yields, making it region-specific for profitability. Naim (2022) <sup>[9]</sup> applies TPB in the Middle East, showing that attitudes and subjective norms strongly influence youth purchasing behavior of organic foods. Patel (2022) <sup>[10]</sup> focuses on micro-nutrients' role in plant health and soil quality, indirectly contributing to the organic farming narrative by advocating balanced nutrient use. Wojciechowska-Solis (2022) <sup>[10]</sup> links environmental awareness with organic purchases in Poland, with health benefits and safety being strong motivators. Mukherjee (2022) <sup>[12]</sup> stresses organic farming as a sustainable alternative to chemical farming in India, vital for food safety, public health, and soil conservation. Zayed (2022) <sup>[13]</sup> finds that in Egypt, attitudes and environmental concern drive organic food intentions, while electronic word-of-mouth influences behavior indirectly. Thakur (2022) <sup>[14]</sup> addresses challenges in transitioning to organic farming, citing socio-economic and psychological barriers that hinder consumer and farmer participation. Shah (2022) <sup>[15]</sup> notes growing millet demand as part of the healthy food movement, but highlights consumer unawareness and affordability as key obstacles. Sujaya (2022) <sup>[16]</sup> finds gender-based differences in organic vegetable purchase intentions, with health and environmental concerns influencing males and social norms affecting females. Prashanth (2021) <sup>[17]</sup> shows that seed quality and prior satisfaction drive farmers' purchase decisions, implying that product trust and reliability are crucial in organic inputs. Cariappa (2021) <sup>[11]</sup> discusses how COVID-19 affected food

access and waste in India, advocating for stronger local systems and policies to enhance resilience. Mohan (2021) <sup>[19]</sup> emphasizes organic farming's potential in dry land regions; though certification issues and lower transitional yields are key barriers. Kowalska (2021) <sup>[20]</sup> highlights that while pro-environmental attitudes influence organic buying, cultural and perceptual factors vary across regions and require nuanced understanding.

**Problem Statement**

Despite the growing awareness of health and environmental benefits associated with organic food, consumer adoption in India—particularly in Karnataka—remains inconsistent and influenced by diverse socio-economic, psychological, and perceptual factors. High prices, limited availability, skepticism about product authenticity, and inadequate awareness continue to hinder widespread acceptance. While global and national studies offer insights into organic consumption patterns, region-specific empirical evidence on the behavioral drivers in Karnataka is limited. This gap necessitates a focused investigation to understand the key determinants shaping consumer buying behavior towards organic food products in the state.

**Objective of the Study**

To examine the key factors influencing consumer buying behavior towards organic food products in Karnataka

**Research Methodology**

The present study adopts a descriptive research method to analyze the key factors influencing consumer buying behaviour towards organic food products in Karnataka. The research aims to understand various dimensions of consumer preferences and perceptions through a structured, empirical approach. The study is based on both primary and secondary data sources to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the subject.

**1. Sample Area and Size**

The study was conducted across five major districts of Karnataka, namely Mysuru, Bengaluru, Mangaluru, Hassan, and Mandya, with an equal number of respondents selected from each region. A total of 250 respondents were surveyed.

**Table 1** Sample Size

Location	Number of Respondents
Mysuru	50
Bengaluru	50
Mangaluru	50
Hassan	50
Mandya	50
Total	250

**2. Respondent Sample Criteria**

The following table presents the respondent classification based on age, gender, and income

**Table 2:** Demographic Information

Demographic Category	Sub-categories	Sample Distribution
Age	18–25 years	60
	26–35 years	70
	36–45 years	60
	Above 45 years	60
Gender	Male	135

	Female	115
Income (Monthly)	Below Rs.25,000	55
	Rs.25,001–Rs.50,000	85
	Rs.50,001–Rs.75,000	60
	Above Rs.75,000	50

**3. Sources of Data**

- a. Primary Data:** Collected through a structured questionnaire designed using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from “Strongly Disagree (1)” to “Strongly Agree (5).” The questionnaire was designed to assess consumer attitudes, awareness, buying preferences, satisfaction, and perceptions regarding organic food products.
- b. Secondary Data:** Gathered from journals, government reports, articles, market research databases, published statistics from APEDA (Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority), FSSAI, reports by ASSOCHAM, and existing literature from reputed national and international studies related to consumer behaviour and organic markets.

**4. Tools of Analysis**

- **Descriptive Statistics:** Used to summarize demographic characteristics, means, and standard deviations of responses.
- **Regression Analysis:** Employed to examine the relationship between dependent variable (buying behaviour) and independent variables such as health consciousness, price sensitivity, trust, and availability.
- **ANOVA (Analysis of Variance):** Used to determine whether there are significant differences in buying behaviour across different demographic groups (e.g., income, age, city).

**5. Hypothesis**

**H<sub>0</sub> (Null Hypothesis):** There is no significant influence of health consciousness, environmental awareness, price sensitivity, product availability, and trust in certification on consumer buying behaviour towards organic food products in select districts of Karnataka.

**Data Analysis & Interpretation**

The data analysis and interpretation section presents the empirical findings derived from primary data collected through a structured questionnaire. It aims to evaluate the influence of various demographic and behavioural factors on consumer buying behaviour towards organic food products in Karnataka.

**Table 3:** Descriptive Statistics for Key Variables (N = 250)

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation
Health Consciousness	4.32	0.61
Environmental Awareness	3.89	0.75
Price Sensitivity	3.42	0.85
Product Availability	3.78	0.68
Trust in Certification	4.01	0.69
Purchase Frequency	3.65	0.73
Brand Awareness	3.55	0.88
Influence of Advertisement	3.21	0.95
Peer/Social Influence	3.60	0.76
Nutritional Belief	4.15	0.64

The descriptive statistics indicate that health consciousness (Mean = 4.32, SD = 0.61) and nutritional belief (Mean = 4.15, SD = 0.64) are the most influential factors driving consumer behaviour towards organic food, showing strong agreement and low variability among respondents. Trust in certification also scores high (Mean = 4.01), reflecting consumer reliance on verified labels. In contrast, influence of advertisement has the lowest mean (3.21) with a relatively high standard deviation (0.95), suggesting varied responses and lower impact of marketing efforts. Price sensitivity (Mean = 3.42) indicates moderate concern regarding the cost of organic products. Overall, the results show that internal motivators like health and nutrition are stronger determinants of organic food consumption than external marketing influences.

**Table 4:** ANOVA – Significance of Demographic Variables on Consumer Behaviour Factors

Variable	Demographic Factor	F-value	p-value	Significance
Health Consciousness	Age Group	3.85	0.010	Significant
Environmental Awareness	Income Level	4.12	0.004	Significant
Price Sensitivity	Income Level	5.36	0.002	Significant
Trust in Certification	Gender	1.21	0.272	Not Significant
Product Availability	City	3.99	0.008	Significant
Nutritional Belief	Age Group	4.05	0.007	Significant
Brand Awareness	City	2.03	0.088	Not Significant
Advertisement Influence	Gender	3.12	0.047	Significant
Social Influence	Age Group	2.94	0.035	Significant
Purchase Frequency	Income Level	4.55	0.003	Significant

The ANOVA results reveal that several consumer behaviour factors are significantly influenced by demographic variables. Health consciousness and nutritional belief are significantly affected by age group with p-values of 0.010 and 0.007 respectively, indicating varying health awareness across age categories. Environmental awareness ( $p = 0.004$ ),

price sensitivity ( $p = 0.002$ ), and purchase frequency ( $p = 0.003$ ) are significantly influenced by income level, suggesting that financial capacity impacts both eco-consciousness and buying patterns. Product availability shows a significant difference across cities ( $p = 0.008$ ), reflecting regional disparities in access to organic products.

Advertisement influence is significantly associated with gender ( $p = 0.047$ ), implying varied responses to promotional efforts. However, trust in certification ( $p =$

0.272) and brand awareness ( $p = 0.088$ ) do not differ significantly across gender and city, indicating consistent perceptions in these areas.

**Table 5:** Regression Analysis – Influence of Independent Variables on Buying Behaviour

Independent Variable	$\beta$ Coefficient	t-value	p-value	Significance
Health Consciousness	0.346	5.32	0.000	Significant
Environmental Awareness	0.118	1.91	0.057	Not Significant
Price Sensitivity	-0.214	-3.47	0.001	Significant
Product Availability	0.251	4.01	0.000	Significant
Trust in Certification	0.298	4.78	0.000	Significant
Nutritional Belief	0.332	5.15	0.000	Significant

The regression analysis reveals that health consciousness, nutritional belief, trust in certification, and product availability are significant positive predictors of consumer buying behaviour toward organic food products, as indicated by their high beta coefficients and p-values less than 0.05. Among these, health consciousness ( $\beta = 0.346$ ) and nutritional belief ( $\beta = 0.332$ ) have the strongest influence, highlighting the importance of personal well-being in purchase decisions. Trust in certification ( $\beta = 0.298$ ) and availability ( $\beta = 0.251$ ) also play a crucial role, emphasizing the need for reliable labeling and easy access to organic products. On the other hand, price sensitivity ( $\beta = -0.214$ ) shows a significant negative relationship, indicating that higher prices act as a barrier. Environmental awareness, although theoretically relevant, was not statistically significant, suggesting it has limited practical influence on buying behaviour in the current market context.

**Results and Discussion**

- Health Consciousness Significantly Influences Purchase Behaviour: As per regression analysis ( $\beta = 0.346, p < 0.001$ ), health consciousness is a strong predictor of organic food buying behaviour, supporting the framed hypothesis.
- Regression results ( $\beta = 0.332, p < 0.001$ ) confirm that belief in nutritional value directly influences buying decisions, reinforcing the role of intrinsic motivation.
- With a significant negative  $\beta$  value of  $-0.214 (p = 0.001)$ , price sensitivity deters consumer interest, especially among lower-income groups, validating the hypothesis.
- ANOVA shows significant difference across cities ( $F = 3.99, p = 0.008$ ), indicating that accessibility affects buying patterns and varies based on location.
- Though significant differences exist across income levels ( $p = 0.004$ ), regression analysis ( $p = 0.057$ ) shows it has no direct impact on purchase behaviour.
- Descriptive statistics (Mean = 4.01) show consistently high trust in certification across all demographics, though ANOVA ( $p = 0.272$ ) indicates no significant variation.
- Introduce smaller, cost-effective packaging and government-backed subsidies to make organic products more accessible to price-sensitive consumers.
- Improve logistics and create local organic marketplaces in regions like Hassan and Mandya to address availability disparities.
- Focus marketing efforts on highlighting health and nutritional benefits through trusted endorsements, especially targeting young and urban populations.

**Conclusion**

The present study concludes that consumer buying behaviour towards organic food products in Karnataka is predominantly influenced by health consciousness, nutritional beliefs, product availability, and trust in certification. While price sensitivity negatively impacts purchasing decisions, factors like environmental awareness show limited direct influence. Significant differences were observed across demographic groups such as age, income, gender, and region, indicating the need for targeted marketing and policy interventions. Urban consumers, especially the younger and higher-income segments, displayed stronger preferences for organic products. The findings emphasize the importance of improving regional access and affordability to encourage wider adoption. Given the growing concern for health and sustainability, the organic market in Karnataka holds strong potential. Future research could focus on consumer behaviour in rural areas and explore the long-term impact of awareness campaigns and government subsidies on organic consumption patterns. A longitudinal study approach may also offer deeper insights into evolving consumer preferences over time.

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