

Consumer Perception towards Organic Food Product in Meerut City

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ABSTRACT

“When health is absent, wisdom cannot reveal itself, art cannot manifest, strength cannot fight, wealth becomes useless and intelligence cannot be applied.” - Herophilus

Food quality, human wellness and environment interest along with sensory characteristics such as nutrients scale, better taste, chemical free, natural, freshness and appearance influence consumer preference for organic and inorganic food products. Consumers relate organic food with natural, healthy, environment and animal friendly, zero use of chemical pesticide and fertilizers.

*The definition of word **Organic** means “an ecological management production system that promotes and enhances biodiversity, biological cycles and soil biological activities and is based on the minimal use of off-farm inputs and on management practices that restores, maintains and enhances ecological harmony”. Irradiation and use of genetically modified organism (GMO's) or products produced from or by GMO are generally prohibited by organic legislation.*

In other words organic food are less exposed or processed so as to preserve the integrity of the food without synthetic ingredients, preservatives and irradiations. Organic food is the product of farming system which avoids the use of chemical fertilizer, pesticides and growth regulators. Organic products are obtained by processes which are eco friendly and cent percent natural.

Responses of 120 food consumers were studied; their responses and vision towards organic food were enquired through questionnaire. The studies show that all consumers are not having the same methods of approach towards organic food. Subsequently, the statistical process guides us to comprehend the relation and the model of consumer behavior trends in organic food in Meerut city and also discuss the various criteria for the generation of demand for the organic food.

This paper studies the awareness about organic food, health consciousness, and food safety concern and purchase intension within the context of organic food product.

Keywords: Organic Food, Ecological Harmony, Biodiversity, GMO, Synthetic Ingredients

JEL Classification: I15, I31, Q18, Q26, Q57

INTRODUCTION

Today India is on the cusp of change; it is one of the few countries in the world which has young and growing population with higher purchasing power.

The Honorable Prime Minister of India, Shri. Narendra Modi has been constantly stressing on the need to work towards the ways and means to promote organic food and change the consumer's perception in this direction. He identified organic farming and food habits as a National Priority and emphasized on the need to grow this sector in his maiden speech in the Parliament.

There is no common definition of "organic" due to the fact that different countries have different standards for products to be certified "organic". In simplest words organic foods are minimally processed to maintain the integrity of the food without artificial ingredients, preservatives or irradiation.

The definition of word **Organic** means "an ecological management production system that promotes and enhances biodiversity, biological cycles and soil biological activity and is based on the minimal use of off-farm inputs and on management practices that restores, maintain and enhances ecological harmony" (National Standard Board Of The US Department Of Agriculture (USDA)).

Organic products are obtained by the processes which are friendly to the environment, by using cultivation techniques that considers the attributes of the final product and the production methods. A wide range of consumers of organic food and non-organic food were addressed and scrutinized to obtain their observations and visions towards organic food.

Consumer Behavior

Consumer Behavior consists of ideas, feelings, experiences and actions of consumers with additional environmental factors like ads, product price and comments. Furthermore, consumer behavior is a dynamic process because of the continuous change in ideas, perceptions and activities of consumers as an individual or in a group (Olson and Peter, 2008)

LITERATURE REVIEW

Review of contributions of past studies made by various researchers which will enable to identify the research gap to continue the study is as follows-

1. Ajzen (1991)

In general, the intention to purchase organic food decreases with a limitation of knowledge and awareness towards organic food products in addition with many other factors affecting consumer's perceptions and attitudes.

2. Krystallis (2002); Krystallis and Chrysosoidis (2005); Tsakiridou et al. (2008); and Fotopoulos

a. cases where similar attitudes between different consumers were depicted, cultural differences lead consumers to seek different values when making purchasing decisions on organic food products. Consumer behavior involves a complex and sophisticated pattern that requires marketing research in order to understand the process.

b. The basic idea behind consumer research is the questioning of consumers about their reasons for buying, however researchers have to go deeper and also ask people how and in which circumstances they purchase and

consume organic food product. Consumer behavior consists of ideas, feelings, experiences and actions, along with additional environmental factors like advertisements and price.

3. Bourn and Prescott (2002)

They have consolidated and compared numerous empirical analyses on consumer preferences and attitude towards, organic food relative to conventionally grown food products. This review emphasizes on importance of organic food consumer demand and marketing issues, including:

- (i) The implications of an economic definition of organically grown food for consumer demand.
- (ii) Attributes that shoppers consider most when comparing organic with conventionally grown products.
- (iii) Level and characteristics of consumer knowledge and awareness about organic food.
- (iv) Assessment methods and characteristics of organic consumer attitudes and preferences.
- (v) Price range of organic food product, price premium and characteristics of consumer's shows their willingness-to-pay for products.
- (vi) Profile of organic food consumers.

4. Nandagopal and Chinnaiyan (2003)

They concluded that the mode of purchase of product which also affect buying pattern shows the perception of consumers towards organic food products.

5. Paddle and Foster 2005

Consumer behavior is a dynamic process because of continuous changes in ideas, perceptions and activities of the consumers. Attitude is shaped selectively according to consumers needs. Learning is gained by experience and it affects consumer's behavior. Scientific evidence suggests that almost all behaviors are learnt. Learning differences between stimuli and a response, and consumer behaviors translates as a learnt attitude, along with how it is learnt and experienced, is very important for marketers.

6. Lea and Worsley 2005; Tsakiridou et al. 2008

According to Tsakiridou et al. (2008) a study reflects that consumers seem to show that they are informed about environmental and health issues. Consumer's attitudes, is particular for health and the environment, which are the most important factors that explain consumer's decision-making processes for organic food products

7. Vanniarajan and Kubendran (2005)

Describe that consumer's perception and usage of any product can be changed due to change in food eating habits. If income and urbanization increases among the consumers then the percentage of income spent on food consumption will increase. The urban consumer mostly like branded products as compared to rural consumers.

8. Srithamma, Vithayarungruangsri, and Posayanonda 2005

It is a worldwide phenomenon that people have become more and more separated from the origins of their food. People are worried about their health and hence seek out certified products to protect themselves from toxins and carcinogens. There is an increasing awareness of the domestic problems regarding pesticide poisoning and diseases from flesh food products.

9. Bonti and Yirido (2006)

In their final report regarding consumer's perception & preferences for organic food after doing Meta Analysis, the following points were observed-

1. Consumers tend to buy organic food on the grounds of quality, naturally grown, and health.
2. Study has indicated that some consumers from the same state have clear idea of organic food and some have vague idea about it.
3. Though consumers have shown willingness to pay premium price, but very few were ready to pay high premium.

10. Gil and Solar 2006; Briz and Ward 2009

It has been founded that more information about organic food in the market is necessary, which increases consumer's organic food knowledge, as it positively influences consumer's attitudes towards organic food products.

11. Gracia and Magistracy 2007

Education has also been reported as a significant factor affecting consumer attitudes towards organic food products. People with higher education are more likely to express positive attitudes towards organic products.

12. Onyango, Hallman, and Bell-lows 2007; Gracia and Ministries 2007; Briz and Ward 2009; Essoussi and Zahaf 2008

They concluded that increasing consumer demand for high quality products and food safety makes organic food an interesting option for people in market.

13. Aryal et al. 2009

In this research the simple framework was developed to analyze consumer's perceptions and attitudes towards organic food. Consumer's decision whether to buy or not is based on three main aspects- knowledge, attitude, and intention. Consumer's knowledge is affected by the type and quality of information made available to them. Advertisements, processing, awareness of certifications and labels, all play a vital role in knowledge enrichment. Thus, knowledge and awareness are critical in the consumer's behavior.

In addition, demographic characteristics are also important factors for purchasing behavior, which can explain the purchase of organic products. Individual socio-demographics include economic characteristics (i.e. personal or household income) and are commonly included as determinants of choice. If an individual cannot clearly differentiate between organic food and conventional food products, a price premium on the organic food product can confuse and affect the individual's purchasing decision. Consumer's age, education, family size, marital status, and children in household, along with product attributes, affects their attitude and preference to buy the organic products.

14. Voon, Ngui, and Agrawal (2011); Sangkumchaliang and Huang (2010)

Many studies have found a variety of factors that can potentially influence organic food consumption. Concern for health, environmental protection, concern for the chemical residues in conventional food products,

pesticides, nutritional value improved taste and flavor in organic food products are some of the factors identified.

15. Sangeetha (2015)

It was founded that consumers demand for organic food is strongly influenced by his knowledge, attitude, price and food attributes of organic products.

16. Esna, Seval and Nuri (2016)

They studied factors affecting demand of 500 consumers for organic food. Many graduated consumers of age group of 18 to 49 were found to be buying organic food because it is grown in natural way, healthy and certified. One third consumers were ready to pay premium of 50% on the price of organic food. The study indicated awareness about benefits of organic food is more among educated, financially secured people.

17. Sathis Kumar and Dr. E. Muthukumar (2016)

They found out that consumers give more importance to factors like health, environmental safety, knowledge and culture where organic food was concerned. However, they were indifferent towards attributes of organic food like taste, colour of the food etc.

After reviewing the literature an attempt is made to analyse level of knowledge that consumers of Meerut City have about organic food. At the same time some reasons due to which demand for organic food is not growing fast are also studied. Subsequently the statistical process guides us to comprehend the relation and the model of the consumer behavior trends in organic food in Meerut city. Premium price continues to suppress organic food consumption. Organic Products refers to ecological products such as healthy food, phosphate free, recyclable, refillable ozone friendly, and environment friendly. There are some of the things consumers most often associate with organic marketing.

Table 1: Products produced in India by Organic farming

Major products produced in India by Organic farming	
Type of Product	Products
Commodity	Tea , Coffee, Rice, Wheat
Spices	Cardamom , Black pepper , White Peeper, Ginger, Turmeric , Vanilla , Tamarind , clove, Cinnamon , Nutmeg , Mace, Chili
Pulses	Red gram , Black Gram
Fruits	Mango , Banana , Pineapple, passion fruit, sugarcane, orange , Cashew nut , Walnut
Vegetables	Okra, Brinjal, Garlic, Onion , Tomato , Potato

Oil seeds	Mustard , sesame , castor , sunflower
Others	Cotton , Herbal Extracts

Source: Garibay S V and Jyoti K, 2003

THE ADVANTAGES OF ORGANIC FOOD INCLUDE

1. Nutrient-Dense Food: According to the State of Science Review done in 2008, organic food have more nutritional superiority than its non-organic counterparts.
2. Stronger, More Energetic Body: No pesticides, chemicals, or processed additives mean a smaller risk of disease, illness, and disorders in human body. It makes body more strong and energetic unlike unhealthy junk food.
3. It tastes better: It may not taste as good, if person is addicted to junk food additives, such as processed sugar and MSG. Experiencing truly healthy food, the mind set changes.
4. Safe from dangerous pesticides and scary chemicals : Scary chemical and pesticides in herbicides and fertilizers which are absent in organic food, may cause diseases (breast , prostate cancers, leukemia, infertility , convulsions , immune and endocrine disorders, Parkinson diseases and depression, cardiac diseases, hypertension and numerous diseases) thus making organic food safe.
5. Safe from other crazy shizz: Things like genetically modified food (Franken food , such as tomatoes spliced with fish genes for cold weather tolerance) , food fertilize with sewer sludge , appetite enhancers given to animals and synthetic hormones are just few more advantages of organic food.
6. Supports the local economy: Purchasing organic, especially from the farmer's market, support local community economy, creating jobs and keeping farmers thriving.
7. Peace of mind: knowing and buying organic food can help you to enjoy what you eat for all the reasons outline above.
8. Supports and is supported by Nature.

SCOPE AND IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

With rising concern of health issues and food safety, many consumers have turned their site to organic products. The increased consumer's interest in organic food is due to benefits like free from pesticides and chemical residues. Organic food promotes a balance between human, other living organisms and the nature. It also promotes no artificial preservatives and best maintain the originality of the food. This prevents excess use of harmful ingredients (insecticides and pesticides) and thereby ensures health.

This study attempted to gain knowledge about consumer's attitude towards organic food product consumption. The rationale for carrying out this study is that consideration for the environment could come only from well-informed citizens who are aware of, and fully committed to their rights to a quality, health and environment. Nevertheless, before any behavior can be changed, it is necessary to evaluate the current state of consumer's awareness and knowledge, therefore consumer's attitude, perception towards organic food products, willingness to pay for organic food product and intention to purchase organic food will be the main agenda of this study.

This report is an outcome of deep study of available knowledge as well as detailed consultations with higher knowledgeable personals.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To asses and evaluate the factors facilitate the consumption of organic products in the study area.
2. To analyze the potential markets for organic products and potential organic products available for the customers.
3. To examine the consumers perception towards organic products in the study area.
4. To analyze the benefits of eating organic food for the consumers.
5. To study who is actually responsible for the making of organic products according to consumers in the study area.
6. To study and analyze the satisfaction rate of customers via organic food.

METHODOLOGY

Data Collection Methods

1. The study is based on primary and secondary data. The primary data has been collected from consumers on Simple Random sampling techniques through administering the structured questionnaires.
2. 120 consumers that were selected were completely on the basis of convenience and supporting the purpose of study and to understand the consumer's perceptions towards organic food products in Meerut city.

Consumer's perception towards organic food products and its influences towards purchases

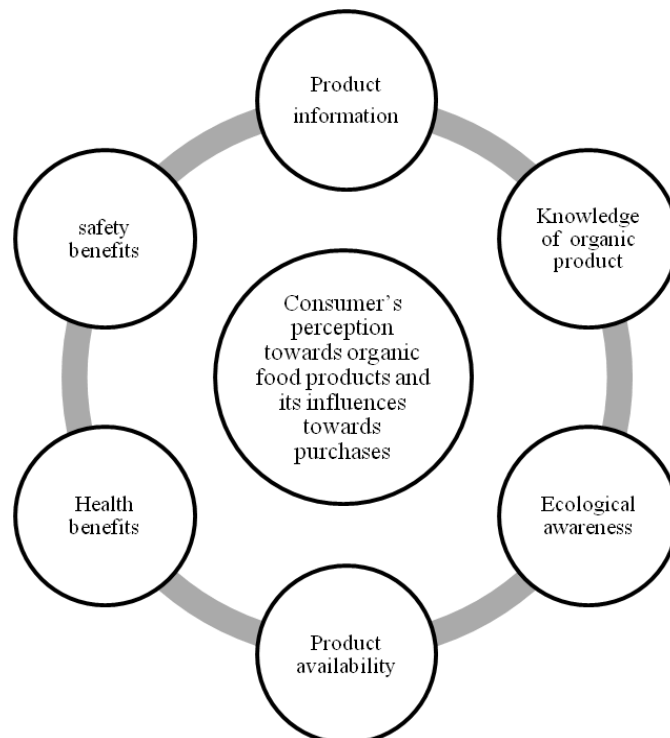


Figure No.1

Analysis and Interpretation

After analyzing 120 consumers of Meerut and nearby areas, the following analysis has been gathered. The analysis has been explained in the form of tables, graphs of different forms and pie charts.

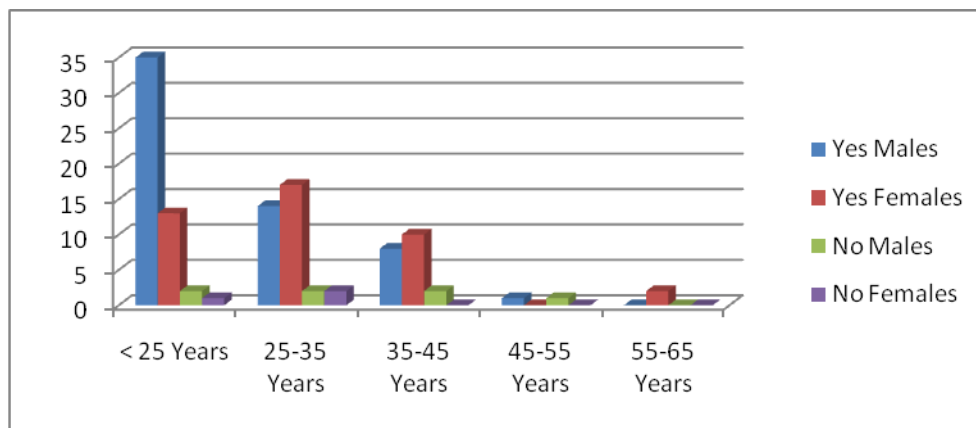
1. Do you know the difference between organic and inorganic food products?

Area	Rural		Urban		Total
	Male	Female	Male	Female	
Options					
Yes	12	4	46	38	100
NO	4	2	3	1	10

After analyzing 110 consumers of Meerut city it is found that the consumers (male and females) of the urban areas are more prone to buy organic food than the consumers (males and females) of the rural areas. It was also found that out of 110 reviewed people, 100 (16 rural and 84 urban) people know about organic food and 10 (6 rural and 4 urban) people have no idea about organic food.

2. The different age group of people being analyzed is as follows:

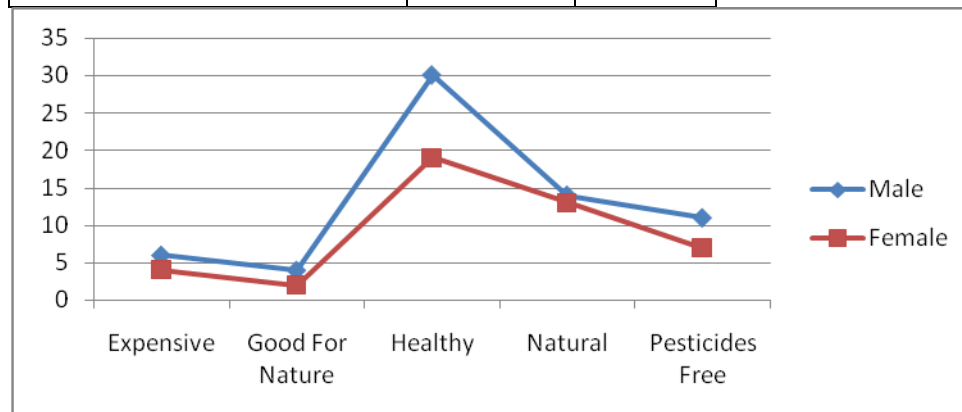
Options	Gender/Age	< 25	25-35	35-45	45-55	55-65
		Years	Years	Years	Years	Years
Yes	Males	35	14	8	1	0
	Females	13	17	10	0	2
No	Males	2	2	2	1	0
	Females	1	2	0	0	0
Total		51	35	20	2	2



Out of analyzed population, maximum population i.e. 51 (35 males +13 females+3 (who don't know about organic food)) belongs to age less than 25 years.

3. What one sentence or word comes to your mind when you think of Organic food?

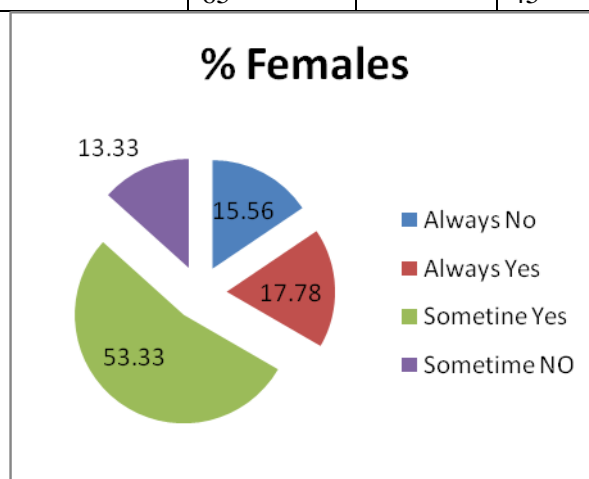
Options/ Gender	Male	Female
Expensive	6	4
Good For Nature	4	2
Healthy	30	19
Natural	14	13
Pesticides Free	11	07

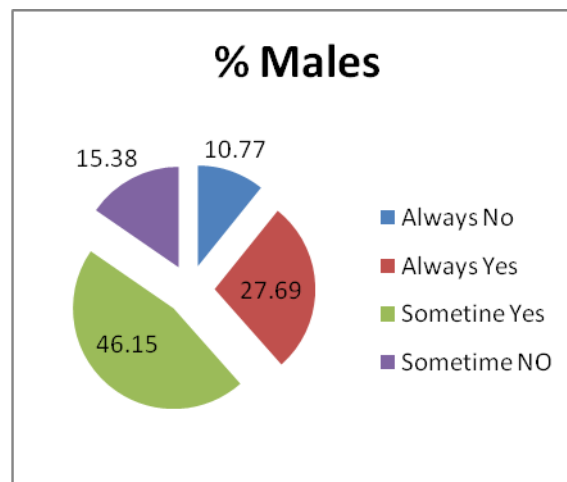


The analyzed responses show that maximum people i.e. 49 out of 110 organic consumers think that organic food is healthy for consumption.

4. Is the word organic written on a product enough for you to be confident that it is organic?

Options/ Gender	Males	% Males	Females	% Females
Always No	7	10.77	7	15.56
Always Yes	18	27.69	8	17.78
Sometime Yes	30	46.15	24	53.33
Sometime NO	10	15.38	6	13.33
Total	65		45	

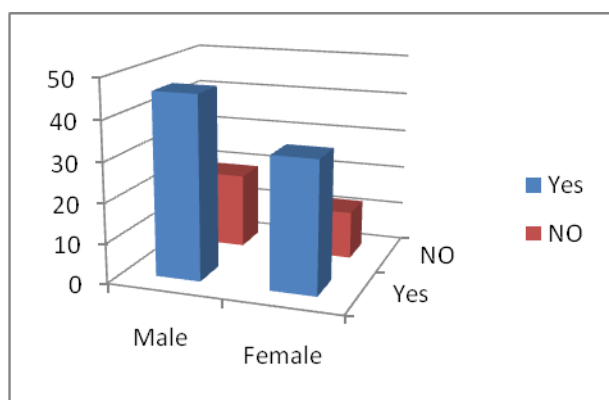




The responses of the population shows that for 46.15% of males the word organic written on the product make them confident to believe (sometimes) that the product is organic. Whereas 53.33% of females are confident to believe (sometimes) that the product is organic.

5. Do you see the product has been certified organic?

Options/ Gender	Male	Female
Yes	46	33
NO	19	12

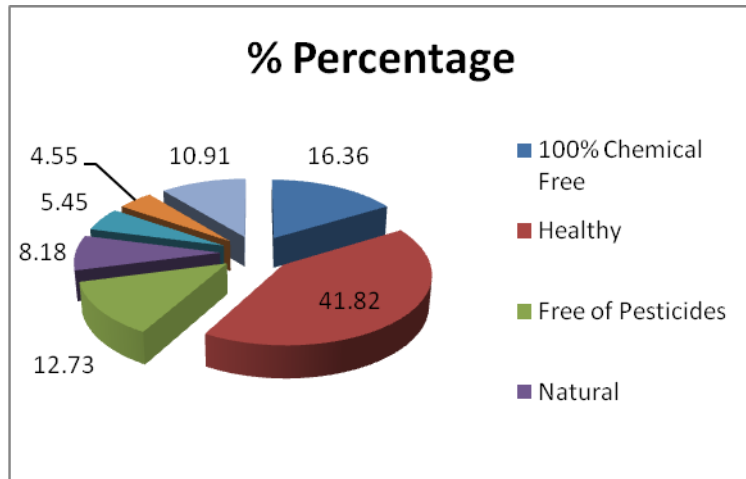
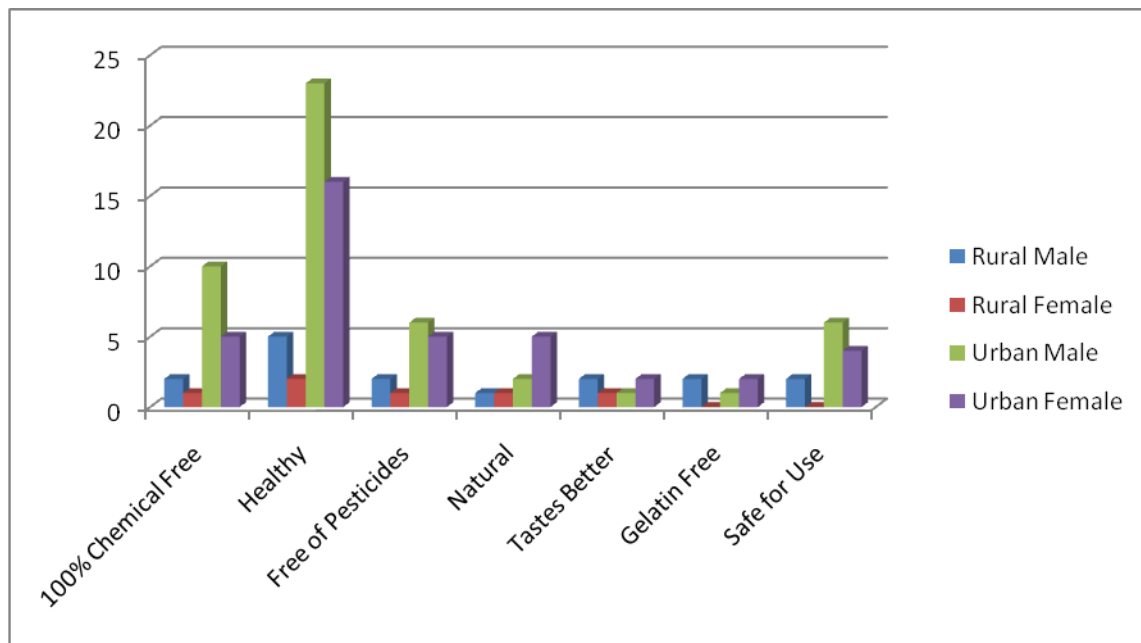


Analyzed data shows that it is more important for males than to female to see whether the product is certified organic although the certification of products being organic is not a big concern for a small portion of the population.

6. Tell which of these do you think are the benefits of eating organic food.

Area	Rural		Urban		Total	% Percentage
	Male	Female	Male	Female		
100% Chemical Free	2	1	10	5	18	16.36
Healthy	5	2	23	16	46	41.82
Free of Pesticides	2	1	6	5	14	12.73

Natural	1	1	2	5	9	8.18
Tastes Better	2	1	1	2	6	5.45
Gelatin Free	2	0	1	2	5	4.55
Safe for Use	2	0	6	4	12	10.91

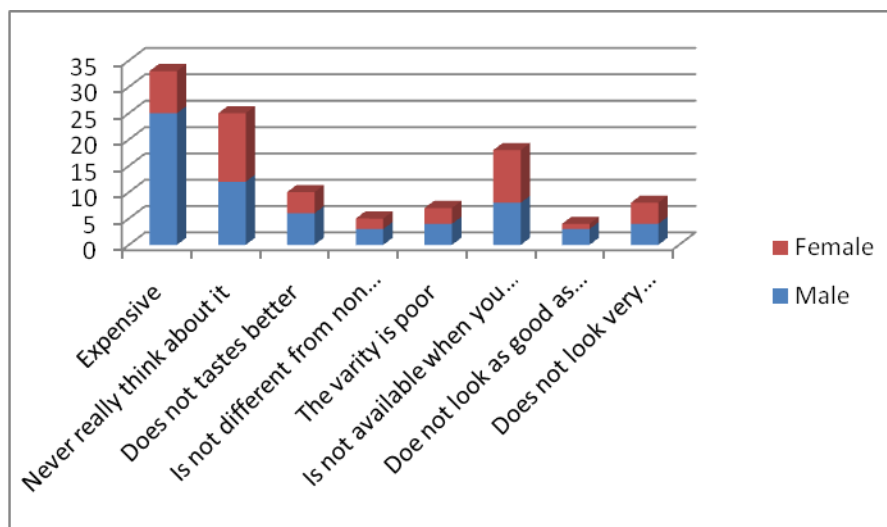


After analyzing the data of 110 organic food consumers (41.82% + 16.36%) people buy organic food due to its benefits of being healthy and 100% chemical free. Whereas 12.73% people buy organic food because it is free from pesticides. Other people buy it because it safe to use, natural and tastes better.

7. Which of these reasons most influence your decision not to buy organic food?

Options/ Gender	Male	Female
Expensive	25	8
Never really think about it	12	13

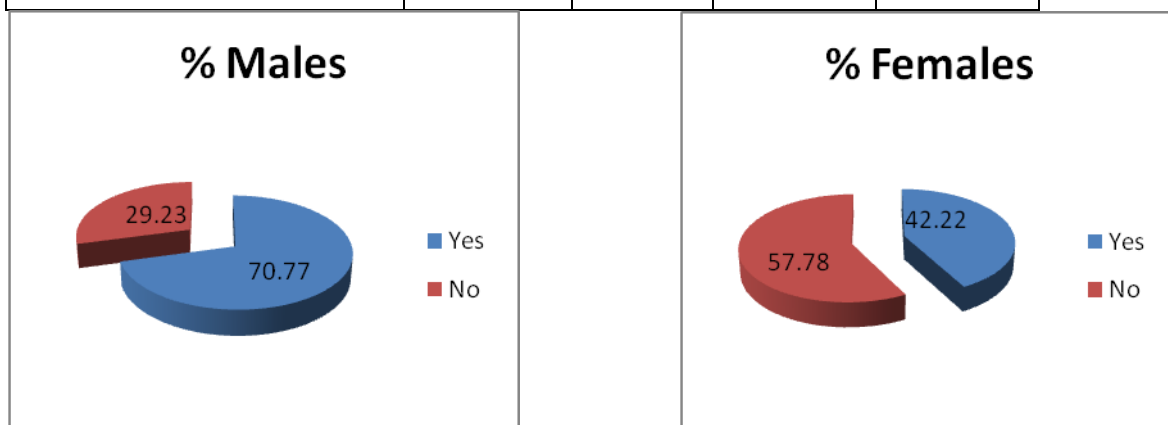
Does not tastes better	6	4
Is not different from non organic food	3	2
The variety is poor	4	3
Is not available when you go to buy it	8	10
Does not look as good as traditional food	3	1
Does not look very attractive	4	4



After analyze of data , it is seen that maximum percentage of people are not influenced in buying organic food because of its characteristics of being expensive and never really thought of buying organic food.

8. Have you ever noticed the logo/ symbol on organic food any where?

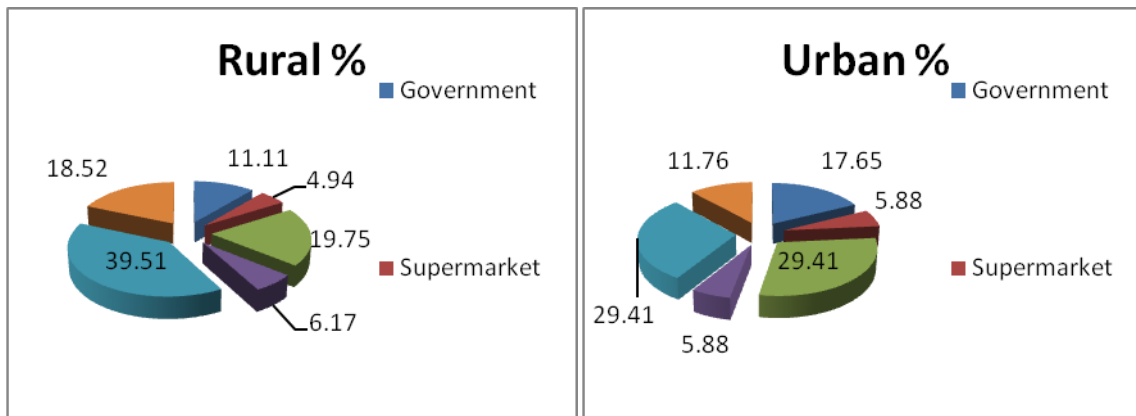
Options/ Gender	Male	% Males	Female	% Females
Yes	46	70.77	19	42.22
No	19	29.23	26	57.78



The analysed data shows , 29.23% of males and 57.78% of females have never notice the logo /symbol of organic food whereas 70.77% of males and 42.22% of females have noticed and seen the logo/symbols of organic food.

9. Who is actually responsible for making product organic according to you?

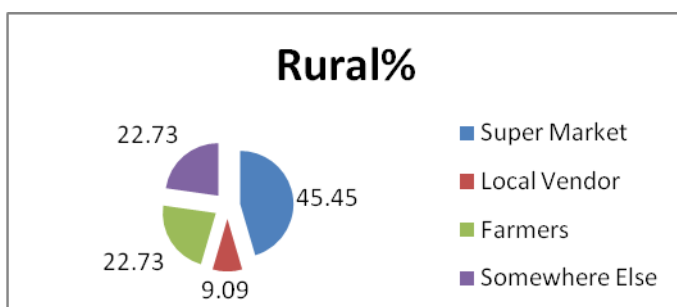
Options/ Area	Rural %	Urban %	Rural	Urban
Government	11.11	17.65	9	3
Supermarket	4.94	5.88	4	1
Organizations Which Provide Organic Certification	19.75	29.41	16	5
Food Board	6.17	5.88	5	1
Farmers	39.51	29.41	32	5
Don't Know	18.52	11.76	15	2

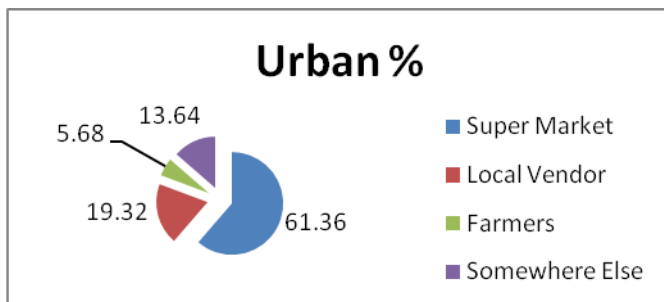


The above table shows that 39.51% of rural area population and 29.41% of urban population think that farmers are responsible for making organic products whereas 18.52% rural population and 11.76% urban population do not know who is responsible for making organic food.

10. Where do you normally shop organic food from?

Options/ Area	Rural%	Urban %	Rural	Urban
Super Market	45.45	61.36	10	54
Local Vendor	9.09	19.32	2	17
Farmers	22.73	5.68	5	5
Somewhere Else	22.73	13.64	5	12

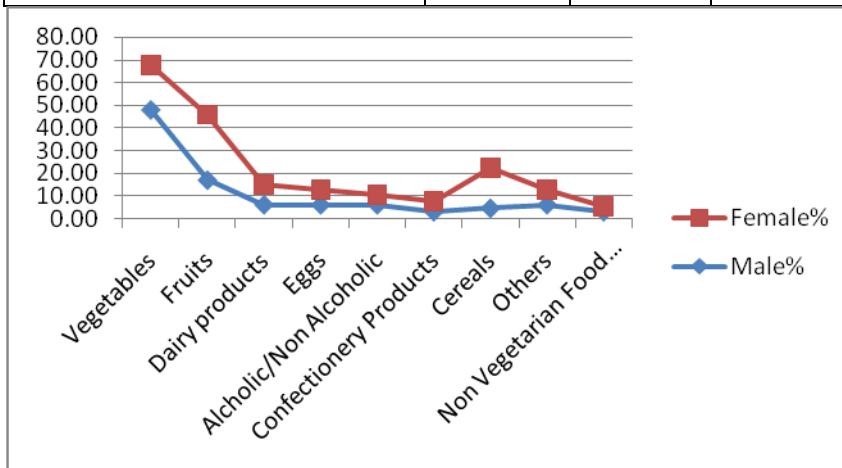




The pie charts show maximum population (45.45% rural and 61.36% urban) shop organic food products from super market.

11. Which of these list are you aware are available as organic food in your nearby market?

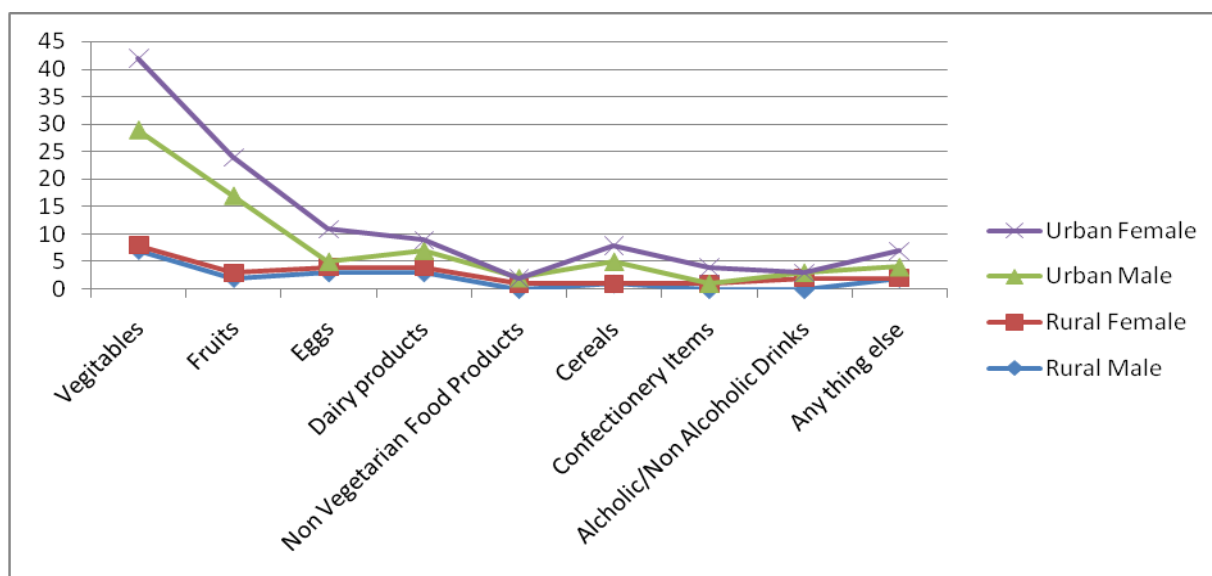
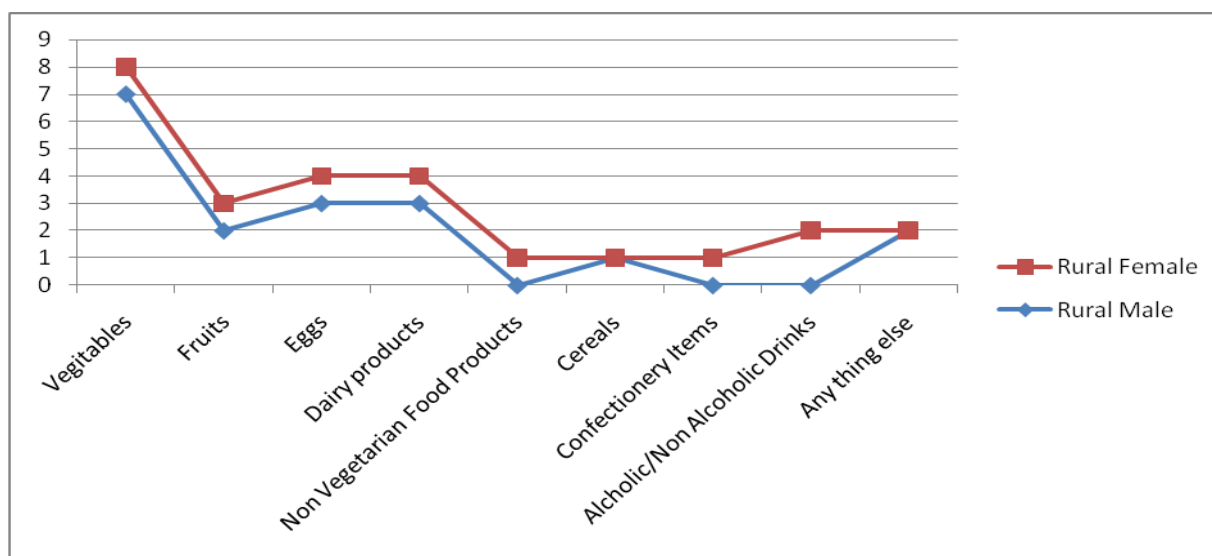
Options/ Gender	Male%	Male	Female	Female%
Vegetables	47.69	31	9	20.00
Fruits	16.92	11	13	28.89
Dairy products	6.15	4	4	8.89
Eggs	6.15	4	3	6.67
Alcoholic/Non Alcoholic	6.15	4	2	4.44
Confectionery Products	3.08	2	2	4.44
Cereals	4.62	3	8	17.78
Others	6.15	4	3	6.67
Non Vegetarian Food Products	3.08	2	1	2.22

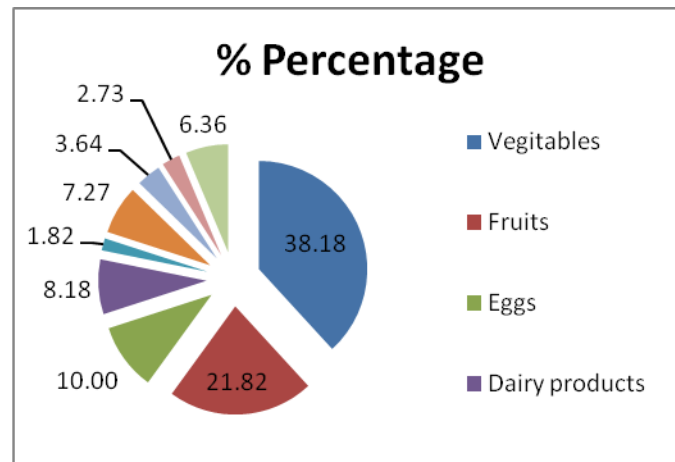


The above graph shows that maximum population shares that they are aware of vegetables and fruits being available as organic food in their nearby market.

12. Which of the following have you brought home as an organic product since last one year?

Options/ Area/ Gender	Rural		Urban		Total	% Percentage
	Male	Female	Male	Female		
Vegetables	7	1	21	13	42	38.18
Fruits	2	1	14	7	24	21.82
Eggs	3	1	1	6	11	10.00
Dairy products	3	1	3	2	9	8.18
Non Vegetarian Food Products	0	1	1	0	2	1.82
Cereals	1	0	4	3	8	7.27
Confectionery Items	0	1	0	3	4	3.64
Alcoholic/Non Alcoholic Drinks	0	2	1	0	3	2.73
Anything else	2	0	2	3	7	6.36

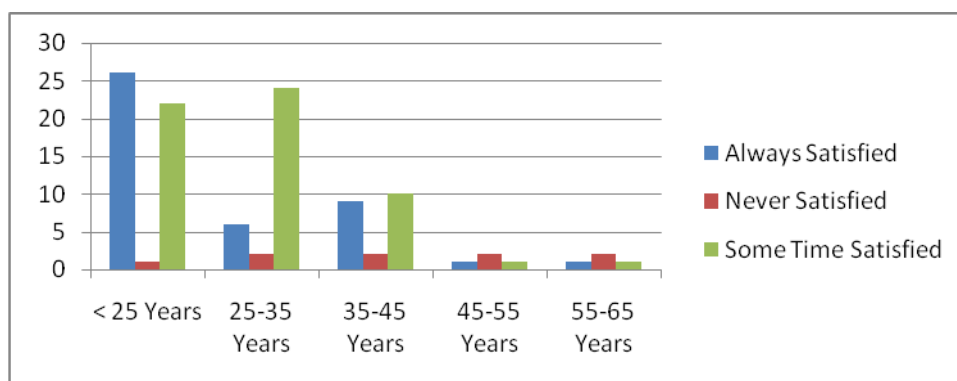




The above analyses show that major population (urban + rural) brought organic vegetables and fruits for their consumption since last one year (from the given list of items).

13. Are you satisfied buying Organic Food Product?

Options/ Age Groups	< 25 Years	25-35 Years	35-45 Years	45-55 Years	55-65 Years
Always Satisfied	26	6	9	1	1
Never Satisfied	1	2	2	2	2
Some Time Satisfied	22	24	10	1	1



The table show that the statistic claims that people of age group less than 25 are always satisfied in buying food products as compare to people above the age of 25 years .

CONCLUSION

Majority of consumers were aware of organic food and its benefits. They were also aware about the problems associated with conventional food. However, this awareness was relatively more among educated respondents. Still majority buy conventional food and not organic food regularly due to some prominent reasons like –

1. High price of goods
2. Lack of related information from where to buy.

3. Lack of ease as well as regular availability

So supply side factors are more responsible for lack of demand for organic food. Effective marketing structure and necessary support from the governmental agencies for organic food is required. It can also be done through NGOs and other Government agencies since it is safer and healthier food along with private sector participation.

LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

1. The responses given by the respondents have been taken as genuine, no further verification is made. (The inference drawn is purely on the responses obtained from the respondent in the study area.)
2. Time is a limiting factor in carrying out an extensive research work.
3. Out of 120 respondents, 09 respondents are the one who don't know about organic food, 01 respondent did not give the responses of the questionnaire.

SCOPE FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

This research provides some important initial insight into the area chosen for the study i.e consumer perception towards Organic food products in Meerut city. There is still an opportunity to extend these findings to gain on and for more comprehensive understanding of importance of organic product consumption in order to lead a healthy life style.

Different types of organic food products available in the market can also be analyzed along with their price and quality satisfaction by comparing with equivalent alternative items.

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QUESTIONNAIRE: CONSUMER PERCEPTION TOWARDS ORGANIC FOOD PRODUCT IN MEERUT CITY

1. *Do you know the difference between organic and inorganic food products?*
 - *Yes*
 - *No*

2. *Gender*
 - *Male*
 - *Female*

3. *The different age group*
 - *Below 25 years*
 - *25-35 Years*
 - *35-45 years*
 - *45-55 years*
 - *55-65 years*
 - *65 and above*

4. *Area*
 - *Urban*
 - *Rural*

5. *What one sentence or word comes to your mind when you think of Organic food?*
 - *Expensive*
 - *Good For Nature*
 - *Healthy*
 - *Natural*
 - *Pesticides Free*

6. *Is the word organic written on a product enough for you to be confident that it is organic?*
 - *Always No*
 - *Always Yes*
 - *Sometime Yes*
 - *Sometime No*

7. *Do you see the product has been certified organic?*
 - *Yes*
 - *No*

8. *Tell which of these do you think the benefits of eating organic food are.*
 - *100% Chemical Free*
 - *Healthy*
 - *Free of Pesticides*
 - *Natural*
 - *Tastes Better*
 - *Gelatin Free*
 - *Safe for Use*

9. *Which of these reasons most influence your decision not to buy organic food?*
 - *Expensive*

- *Never really think about it*
- *Does not tastes better*
- *Is not different from non organic food*
- *The variety is poor*
- *Is not available when you go to buy it*
- *Does not look as good as traditional food*
- *Does not look very attractive*

10. *Have you ever noticed the logo/ symbol on organic food any where?*

- *Yes*
- *No*

11. *Who is actually responsible for making product organic according to you?*

- *Government*
- *Supermarket*
- *Organizations Which Provide Organic Certification*
- *Food Board*
- *Farmers*
- *Don't Know*

12. *Where do you normally shop organic food from?*

- *Super Market*
- *Local Vendor*
- *Farmers*
- *Somewhere Else*

13. *Which of these list are you aware are available as organic food in your nearby market?*

- *Vegetables*
- *Fruits*
- *Dairy products*
- *Eggs*
- *Alcoholic/Non Alcoholic*
- *Confectionery Products*
- *Cereals*
- *Non Vegetarian Food Products*
- *Others*

14. *Which of the following have you brought home as an organic product since last one year?*

- *Vegetables*
- *Fruits*
- *Eggs*
- *Dairy products*
- *Non Vegetarian Food Products*
- *Cereals*
- *Confectionery Items*
- *Alcoholic/Non Alcoholic Drinks*
- *Anything else*

15. *Are you satisfied buying Organic Food Product?*

- *Always Satisfied*
- *Never Satisfied*
- *Some Time Satisfied*