



INVESTIGATION OF ORGANIC FOOD CONSUMPTION PATTERNS AMONG MILLENNIAL PARENTS WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO CHENNAI: IMPLICATIONS FOR HEALTH AND SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION

Dr. Sreeya B

Professor, S.A. College of Arts & Science, School of Management, Chennai.

Abstract

This study looks at how millennial parents in Chennai are shaping their children's interest in organic food, while also comparing generational perspectives and linking these behaviours to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) on health, sustainable consumption, and climate action. Organic food offers potential health benefits by reducing exposure to chemicals, while promoting soil health and potentially boosting nutrient content. It also supports sustainable practices that protect the environment and animal welfare. The objective is to analyse the eco food product consumption patterns of millennial parents in Chennai. Data was collected from the 281 parents, who fall in the age group of millennials who visited various organic food outlets across Chennai using a well-structured questionnaire. It was found that quality has the highest influence on the purchase decisions of parents, postgraduate millennial parents prefer to purchase organic food products and their preference level increases as they use it for a longer period of time. Also, higher income earning millennial parents prefer specific organic stores whereas the low-income consumers prefer organic markets. Based on findings, providing quality products at affordable prices to lower income consumers, will help organic producers/ retailers or entrepreneurs to attract consumers and build a strong consumer base. Millennials shape their children's eco green food choices, driving intergenerational sustainable consumption and offering strategic insights for SDG-aligned policymaking and marketing in India's urban context.

Keywords: *Organic, Eco, Food products, SDG, Millennials, Consumption.*

Introduction

Across the globe, sustainability and environmental concerns increasingly influence consumer decisions regarding food choices. Organic products are cultivated using agricultural methods that avoid chemical fertilizers and pesticides. This approach emphasizes environmental and social responsibility. It focuses on preserving soil health and fertility, ensuring nutrition of plants, and effective management of soil. The goal is to produce nutritious food that prevents from diseases and provides energy.(Organic Products | APEDA, n.d.). According to (Willer et al., 2024), India is positioned second globally in the domain of organic agricultural land and holds the preeminent position concerning the aggregate number of producers. The sector is categorized by a varied range of products, including fruits, vegetables, grains, and pulses, with a notable rise in organic farming area and export potential. The export of eco products from India is also on the rise, specifically, the value of organic exports saw a significant increase over sixteen years, from 498 crore in 2007 to 5525.18 crore in 2022. This growth in export value occurred at a compound annual rate of 16.23 percent. (Poonam et al., 2024). The market for organic food in India attained a valuation of USD 1,917.4 million in the year 2024. It is anticipated that this market will escalate to USD 10,807.9 million by the year 2033, demonstrating a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 20.13% from 2025 to 2033. The expansion of this market can be attributed to an increasing awareness of the health advantages associated with organic food products, a heightened consciousness of the health risks linked to chemical pesticides and fertilizers, as well as a surge in



investments by Indian corporate entities in the domains of agritech, agribusiness, and organic agriculture.(India Organic Food Market Size, Growth & Forecast | 2033, n.d.)

The SDGs established by the UN in 2015, serve as a universal paradigm for handling critical social, economic, and eco-friendly issues by 2030. These 17 interrelated objectives seek to eliminate poverty, safeguard the environment, and promote universal prosperity. They prioritize sustainable development, inclusivity, and responsible growth, urging countries to implement strategies that reconcile human demands with ecological integrity. Within this context, sustainable agriculture is crucial for ensuring enduring food security and ecological health. The production of organic food directly contributes to a number of SDGs. By guaranteeing wholesome produce free of chemicals, it supports SDGs 2 (Zero Hunger) and 3 (Good Health and Well-Being). By lowering greenhouse gas emissions and promoting SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production), its environmentally friendly operations help to achieve SDG 13 (Climate Action). Additionally, organic farming protects ecosystems in accordance with SDG 15 (Life on Land) by maintaining soil fertility and biodiversity.

Consumer behaviour regarding organic food is shaped by various factors. Many consumers are willing to pay premium prices prioritizing health and quality as core factors(Chaudhary, 2024; Kalyani & Prabhavathi, 2023). They are also motivated by the ecological benefits of organic farming (Pawlak & Wróblewska, 2022). However, barriers such as high costs and limited accessibility hinder market growth (Chaudhary, 2024). Parents play a pivotal role in shaping children's consumption behaviour, as they determine food availability at home, model eating practices, and create the broader environment in which food choices are made. Research shows that parental modelling and the accessibility of healthy foods are among the strongest predictors of children's dietary habits, influencing both healthy and unhealthy consumption patterns (Costa & Oliveira, 2023). In addition, feeding practices such as restriction, pressure, or using food as a reward significantly affect children's self-regulation, food preferences, and long-term risk of obesity (Pearson et al., 2009). Parenting style also matters, as authoritative, authoritarian, or permissive approaches shape the effectiveness of feeding practices and can either support or hinder children's healthy development (Pearson et al., 2010). Thus, understanding parental influence is critical for promoting healthy eating behaviours that can persist into adulthood.

Millennials born between 1980 and 2000 (Weber, 2017) with their population and higher purchasing power greatly influence the consumption of various foods and particularly eco foods. (Moreno et al., 2017) and it is critical to study how they shape the consumption pattern of their children.

According to APEDA, "Organic products are grown under a system of agriculture without the use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides with an environmentally and socially responsible approach" (APEDA, 2023). The eco food market in India is facing momentous growth, obsessed by heightened awareness among consumers and a rising preference for better and sustainable food options. Based on a report, the Indian organic food market achieved a value of \$1,278 million in 2022. The forecasts are even more remarkable, with estimates suggesting that the market will surge to \$4,602 million by 2028, demonstrating a robust CAGR of 23.8% from 2023 to 2028. These statistics underscore the substantial potential and bright prospects for the organic sector in India. GAIN (2021).

Amid the COVID-19 pandemic, consumer awareness about the health benefits of organic and sustainable foods has surged. This heightened awareness has driven demand for organic products, particularly those associated with immunity-boosting properties and nutritional value. IMARC (2023).



Hence, understanding consumer behaviour regarding organic food products is crucial for businesses and policymakers. Organic food, with its healthier attributes compared to conventional food, appeals to a significant number of health-conscious consumers, leading them to make purchases (Photcharoen et al., 2020). Furthermore, consumers who consider themselves environmentally conscious are more inclined to buy organic products, perceiving them as both sustainable and ethical (Tandon et al., 2020). But there were limited studies with respect to examining the organic food consumption patterns or behaviours of specific groups or generations (Vehapi & Mitić, 2021) in Indian context. This study focuses on the organic food products consumption patterns of millennial parents in India with special reference to Chennai, Tamil Nadu. This study helps to identify the role played by younger parents in shaping their children's eating behaviour.

Literature Review

Theoretical frameworks of consumer behaviour have evolved from rational paradigms represented by the EKB model (Blackwell et al., 2001) to value-centric perspectives such as the Theory of Consumption Values (Sheth et al., 1991). Contemporary decision-making frameworks are shaped by experiential elements (Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982) and moral considerations (Vitell, 2015) leading to decisions that are fluid and contextually responsive within the spheres of digital, sustainable, and ethical domains.

Price is a critical element of consumer behaviour toward organic food, often influencing willingness to pay (Isojärvi & Aspara, 2023) and it has a major impact if the consumers are highly price sensitive (Wang et al., 2020). (Joshi et al., 2023) examined the various factors that affect the eco food products usage in the Nainital district, Uttarkhand, India. The author collected the data using a survey and the sample size was 110. Collected data was analysed using Henry's Garret's ranking test and it was found that of various factors such as price, environmental concern, brand etc., availability of the eco food products was identified as the major problem faced by the eco food products consumers in the district. (SATYAPRIYA et al., 2019) attempted features that shape the consumer's buying intention and perception towards organic food products in Delhi. A structured questionnaire was administered to 1047 respondents to gather the required data. By analysis, it was found that price and origin of eco food products greatly influence the buying intention of organic food products. (Vehapi & Mitić, 2021) analysed the eco food products purchase patterns of Generation Z consumers in Serbia. Data is collected from 213 students of three universities were analysed using various tools such as Independent Sample T Test, ANOVA etc., It was found that high price, lack of information and availability of the organic food products greatly influence their purchase pattern. (Diagourtas et al., 2023) explored the attitude of organic food product consumers in Greek and Sweden and the influence of socio demographic profile on their purchase pattern. The author adopted an econometric method to analyze and the research findings indicate that Swedish consumers exhibit a higher frequency of purchasing organic foods compared to their Greek counterparts. Environmental consciousness and ethical values play a significant role in motivating Swedish consumers to choose organic products. On the other hand, Greek consumers are influenced by health consciousness and the well-being of their families when opting for organic foods. (Jiang et al., 2023) studied the effect of marketing mix (4Ps) on eco food products consumption of retail consumers in Beijing, China. With data collected from 334 consumers, it was found that product, place and promotion have significant impact in shaping the consumer purchase decisions.

Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the eco food product consumption pattern of the millennial parents

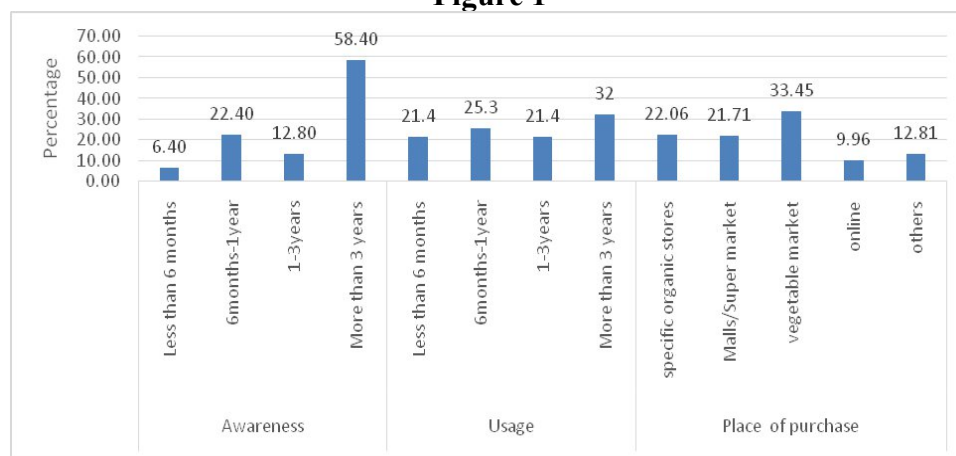


2. To analyse the factors influencing the purchase decisions of the consumers
3. To investigate the influence of individual characteristics on the consumption pattern and purchase decisions.

Methodology: Data was collected from the 281 parents, who fall in the age group of millennials who visited various organic food outlets across Chennai using a well-structured questionnaire. The sampling method adopted was area sampling. Various tools like charts, Chi Square analysis, ANOVA and Correlation were used to arrive at interpretation. The results were as follows.

Results and Discussion

Figure 1



Analysis reveals that there is a considerable level of awareness with 58.40% of respondents having been aware of the organic foods for more than 3 years but only 32% of the respondents use more than 3 years. The major source for procurement of organic food products is from the vegetable market (33.45%) followed by specific organic stores (22.06%) and only 9.96% purchase via online platforms.

Table 1

Dependent Variable	Independent Variable	Correlation Coefficient(r)
Consumer Purchase Behaviour	Price	.544**
	Quality	.627**
	Brand Attribute	.513**
	Consumer Expectation	.477**
	Competitor Attribute	.379**
	Social media	.455**
	Offers	.502**
	Perception	.594**
	Loyalty	.614**
	Environmental Concern	.551**
1% level of significance		



Results show that, among the various factors that will impact the purchase of eco food products, quality - highest influence ($r=0.677$), followed by consumer loyalty ($r=0.614$) and Consumer perception ($r=0.594$). Among the factors, the least influence was exhibited by competitor attributes ($r=0.379$) and social media (0.455). It is evident from the results that organic food consumers look for quality products and their loyalty is high which implies, when they are satisfied with a brand/ product, they may not switch to other products easily. It is interesting to note that environmental concern ($r=0.551$) also contributes to the purchase decision of organic food products by millennial parents. The findings were similar to studies by (Joshi et al., 2023) and (Diagourtas et al., 2023) .

Table 2

Dependent Variable	Independent Variable	F	P	Outcome
Consumer Purchase behaviour	Parent's educational qualification	3.203	0.042	H0 Rejected
	No of Family members	1.632	0.166	H0 Accepted
	No of years of usage of organic food products	2.993	0.031	H0 Rejected
	No of Children	2.279	0.104	H0 Accepted

Analysing the impact of individual characteristics of the consumers on their purchase decision reveals that the purchase decision of the consumers does not vary with number of family members/ number of children but varies with parent's educational qualification and their tenure of using the organic food products. It was found that postgraduate millennial parents prefer to purchase organic food products and their preference level increases as they use it for a longer period of time. This in turn showcases the loyalty of the consumers.

Table 3

Dependent Variable	Independent Variable	Chi Square	P	Outcome
Awareness on organic food products	Parent's educational qualification	94.916	0.000	H0 Rejected
Usage of Organic food products	Number of children	8.382	0.211	H0 Accepted
Preferred place of purchase	Family monthly income	69.874	0.000	H0 Rejected

Also, awareness on organic food products varies with educational qualification of the parents and similar to consumer purchase decisions, post graduate millennial consumers have a high level of awareness towards the organic food products. Also, higher income earning millennial parents (monthly income > Rs. 45,000) prefer specific organic stores whereas the low-income consumers (monthly income below Rs.15,000) prefer organic markets. This provides market opportunity for entrepreneurs, where by providing organic food products at an affordable price to lower income groups, they are able to gain market share and since the consumers are loyal, they are able to sustain in the market.

Conclusion

The organic food market in India is one of the developing sectors in the world, driven by a rising awareness of the health benefits of organic food and a growing concern about the environment.



Especially since the outbreak of covid pandemic, the health consciousness of the consumers has increased. This provides a market for the organic food market producers/ entrepreneurs to explore new market arenas. The objective of the study is to analyse the organic food product consumption patterns of millennial parents in Chennai. It was found that quality has the highest influence on the purchase decisions of parents, postgraduate millennial parents prefer to purchase organic food products and their preference level increases as they use it for a longer period of time. Also, higher income earning millennial parents prefer specific organic stores whereas the low-income consumers prefer organic markets. Based on findings, providing quality products at affordable prices to lower income consumers, will help organic producers/ retailers or entrepreneurs to attract consumers and build a strong consumer base. They can also use social media to improve their reachability to consumers. The study can be further extended to various types of consumers in rural markets or various generation consumers. Millennials shape their children's eco food choices, driving intergenerational sustainable consumption and offering strategic insights for SDG-aligned policymaking and marketing in India's urban context.

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