Organic Product Buying Behaviour–Influences of Social Media

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Organic Product Buying Behaviour–Influences of Social Media

R. Sudha, P. Nithyapriya, K. P. Jaheer Mukthar, and K. C. Shalini

Abstract In recent times, organic farmers have experienced a significant rise in demand in the domestic market. Social Media (SM) plays a significant role in promoting awareness and marketing organic products among diverse Indian consumer groups. To create awareness and influence consumers, marketers use social media (SM) as a very effective and trusted promotional tool. This empirical research aims to assess the online shopping preferences for organic food products among Coimbatore residents and the influence of SM promotions on their purchasing behavior. The article applies both exploratory and descriptive research methods, based on data collected from 220 organic food product buyers in Coimbatore city. At the end of the data assessment, it was found that 86.36% of consumers purchase organic food products online, with 50.53% buying these products for the past 1–5 years. The sample of consumers highly appreciated the availability of a variety of organic food products online, with 82% purchasing more vegetables through online retail sites. Additionally, 84.09% of the samples are well aware of Social Media Channels (SMC) promoting organic products, with Facebook and Instagram being popularly browsed by online organic product shoppers. Furthermore, consumers were found to be satisfied with the quality and fast delivery of products by online retailers.

Keywords Social media · Social media promotion · Organic products · Consumer buying behavior

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1 Introduction

The culture of producing and consuming organic food products is an age-old tradition in India, but with modernization in agricultural practices, these traditions have slowly faded over the years. Consequently, lifestyle diseases, nutritional deficiencies, and dietary changes have increased among the common people. Additionally, environmental concerns force individuals to reconsider buying organic food products, making it a popular trend [1]. India produces organic products on 9.12 million hectares, valued at 221.6 billion, with total exports valued at US$ 1 billion [2]. Until a few years ago, the majority of organic products produced in India were exported. However, in recent times, organic farmers have experienced a high demand rise in the domestic market. The basket of organic food products includes fruits, vegetables, and groceries like cereals, pulses, and masala items [3]. Social Media (SM) plays a significant role in promoting awareness and marketing organic products among diverse Indian consumer groups. Access to different varieties of organic products and the convenience of shopping for organics are made feasible by Social Media Channels (SMC) [4]. Digitalization is expected to be mainstream in the coming years [5]. Consumers who prioritize health will always search for organic products [6].

2 Statement of the Problem

The market for organic produce is in its nascent stage in India, with only a limited number of farmers and lands currently engaged in organic product production. Many consumers still hesitate to buy organic food products, and a large segment remains less informed about organic products, their benefits, or their merits. To create awareness and influence consumers, marketers use social media (SM) as a very effective and trusted promotional tool [7].

3 Reviews

Literature collected on three topics: the organic product market in India, consumers' attitudes towards organic food products, and the role of SM in promoting and marketing organic food products are presented in the following sections.

4 Organic Product Market in India

Producing organic products is not only beneficial to consumers but also has multi-dimensional effects. It benefits farmers on a large scale, prevents soil infertility in the long run, protects the environment, and makes common people more socially conscious [8]. Indian consumers are more sensitive towards purchasing organic products than consumers in Western countries like the USA and various European countries [7]. Consumers' preferences for buying organic products depend on their gender, demographic status, and willingness to buy these products [9].

Consumers' Attitude towards Organic Food Products

Product quality, knowledge about organic products, price, and health concerns significantly influence consumers' attitudes toward organic food products [1, 10]. Demographic and socioeconomic status, along with individual income, greatly influence their attitude toward organic products [11]. Features like safety, health consciousness, and environmental protection are identified as factors influencing consumers' perceptions of organic products [12]. Consumers' trust in organic products influences their purchase decisions [13]. In a comprehensive view, six factors—organic product quality, price, health consciousness, environmental issues, product awareness, and information, value for the money paid, and trust or reliability towards the products—influence consumers' attitudes towards organic products. Young people are more inclined to buy organic products compared to mature adults, and higher-income class consumers prefer buying organic products compared to low-income class consumers [3]. Demand for organic products has increased after severe health effects experienced by Indian consumers during the COVID period, influencing them to consume a healthy, nutritious, and well-balanced diet [14]. Youth and young consumers of organic products (fruits and vegetables) gather information and knowledge about organic products through social media [15].

5 Role of SM in Promoting and Marketing Organic Food Products

Marketers adopt different promotional media for the promotion of organic products. Marketers use SM to establish direct contact with consumers, as SM can transform consumers' attitudes and purchase intentions of organic products [16]. SM promotion of products creates awareness, builds consumers' attitudes towards a product, motivates them to buy the products, and makes satisfied consumers refer the products to others [17]. Social Media Channels (SMC) are acting as important and effective tools in promoting and marketing organic products [18]. SM promotions are similar to word-of-mouth promotion of products by users. Consumers get valuable information about organic products through SM [19]. The above-discussed reviews provide an understanding of the role of SM in promoting products. Still, the research observed

that not many studies were carried out in the past assessing the role of SM influences on organic product purchase intentions among consumers. The identified research gap provides the needed scope for conducting this micro-level research study.

6 Aim of the Article

This empirical research work aims to assess the online shopping preferences for organic food products among Coimbatore residents and the influence of Social Media (SM) promotions on their purchase behavior.

7 Conceptual Framework

Consumers' engagement in SM directly influences their awareness, perception, and buying attitude toward organic products. Social Media Channels (SMC) promote various products and brands of organic products available in the market, attracting a large segment of consumers who browse SMs for pre-purchase decisions [20]. The current research article aims to measure the relationship between variables such as consumers' preference for online shopping of organic food products, the nature of organic products they buy, the SM platform from which they gather information on organic food products, and whether consumers are satisfied with the online purchase of organic products (i.e., whether it meets their expectations). Figure 1 illustrates the conceptual framework.

Hypotheses

H1: There exists an association between consumers' preference to purchase organic food products through online retail stores and the products they prefer to buy.

H2: There exists an association between the nature of organic food products purchased by consumers and the SM platform they frequently view.

H3: There exists a comprehensive association between consumers' preference to buy organic products through online retail stores, the nature of products purchased by

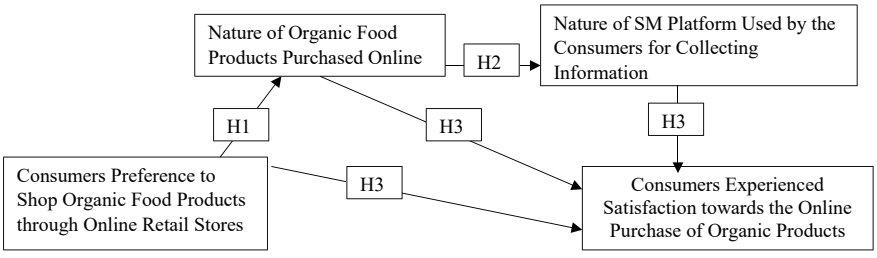

Fig. 1 Conceptual framework. *Source* Pictograph developed

them, the SM platform used by them, and their level of satisfaction towards organic products purchased online after reviewing SMC content.

8 Methodology and Design of the Article

The article employs both exploratory and descriptive research methods. To quantify the responses from the samples, quantitative analysis was conducted using appropriate statistical techniques. The article is based on data collected from 220 organic food product buyers in Coimbatore city. The sample size was computed using Bill Gooden's (2004) sampling formula, applying random sampling for classification and identification of sample areas. The research used both probability and non-probability sampling techniques, specifically snowball sampling for the survey.

Sampling Formula

$$SS = \frac{Z^2 \times (p) \times (1 - p)}{C^2}$$

Conditional Applied

SS = Sample Size

Z = Z−value[A] (e.g., 1.96 for a 95 percent confidence level)

P = Percentage of population picking a choice, expressed as decimal

C = Confidence interval

The Z-values for confidence levels are:

1.645 = 90 percent confidence level

1.96 = 95 percent confidence level

2.576= 99 percent confidence level.

Computed Sample Size

Population of Family Size: 30,09,000 (Coimbatore Metro City)

Sample Percentage: 50 percent
Expected Sample Size: More than 220
Computed Confidence Interval Level = 6.61
Sample Size Needed for the Study: 220

For the article construct probability and non-probability sampling techniques. Probability sampling i.e., random sampling technique was applied for the classification and identification of the sample area. Coimbatore district has 100 wards,

by applying the golden rule of sampling i.e., selecting 1/10th of the population as sample region. Based on the sample size targeted 220 consumers, from each block 22 organic food product buyers were surveyed by applying the snowball sampling technique.

9 Data Reliability and Validity

Sample adequacy, data reliability, and validity were computed, its results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1 indicates that the Computed Reliability (0.894, 0.816, 0.883, and 0.895) and Composite Reliability values (0.847, 0.888, 0.742, and 0.771) and AFL (0.821, 0.844, 0.853, and 0.822) are greater than 0.700 (the threshold mark), indicating the prevalence of Convergent Validity. The AVE values are greater than the square of R values: 0.759 > 0.741, 0.773 > 0.708, 0.761 > 0.716, 0.780 > 0.755, indicating the prevalence of discriminant validity. Thus, it has been concluded that Composite

Table 1 Data reliability, validity and sample adequacy

Variables	Reliability α	CR	Convergent validity AFL	Discriminant validity	
				AVE	R^2
Reasons stated for preferring online purchasing of organic products	0.894	0.847	0.821	0.759	0.741
Nature of product purchased online	0.816	0.888	0.844	0.773	0.708
Social media platforms more explored by consumers	0.883	0.742	0.853	0.761	0.716
Satisfaction with online purchase of organic products	0.895	0.771	0.822	0.780	0.755
Overall Cronbach's Alpha	0.849				
Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy	0.864				
Chi-Square Value	2534.548				
Sig	0.000				

Note CR: Composite Reliability
AVE: Average Variance Extracted
AFL: Average Factor Loading
Norms: Convergent Validity—AFL > 0.7
Norms: Discriminant Validity—AVE > Square of Correlation

Reliability, Convergent, and Divergent Reliability exist among the variables and the data tested. Similarly, the sample adequacy is recorded as 0.864 (Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy), which is satisfactory.

10 Research Discussion

A keen understanding of consumers' demographic and socio-economic status is crucial for marketers to understand their buying behavior. In this study, it has been inferred that 53.64% of the organic product consumers surveyed are men, while 46.36% are women. Among the consumers of various age groups, 56.82% are aged between 31 and 50 years, and 17.73% are aged between 21 and 30 years. The study observed that samples practice different occupations: professionals (30.45%), salaried persons (20.91%), and self-employed (18.64%). Nearly 82.73% of the samples are well-educated, i.e., graduates. The social status of 60.91% of the samples was classified as married, and 67.27% of the samples live in urban regions of Coimbatore city. Out of 220 consumers surveyed, 86.36% usually buy organic food products online, and 13.64% buy organic products through physical stores. Additionally, 50.53% of them have been consuming organic products for the past one to five years, and 28.64% of the samples started consuming organic products in the past year.

Table 2 shows the reasons identified by the authors for buying organic food products online, listed as follows: more choice of branded organic products (83.33%), genuineness of the product (78.33%), ease of organic product availability (75%), economic price/value for money paid (72.67%), and a wide variety of organic products (68.33%).

Table 3 indicates that 82% of consumers mostly buy organic vegetables, and 75.67% of the samples buy organic groceries (such as turmeric, pulses, grains, cereals, and masala products). Buyers of organic fruits and dairy products, as well as meat, are equally distributed at 71.67%, respectively.

Table 4 shows that 40.91% of Coimbatorians always purchase organic products through online retail stores. Whereas, 38.18% of the samples said that they mostly procure organic food products through online stores, and 20.91% of the samples were categorized as occasional online buyers.

Table 2 Reasons stated for preferring online purchasing of organic products

Variables	Always	Sometimes	Rarely	Sum	Mean	Rank
Genuity of the product	117 (53.18)	62 (28.18)	41 (18.65)	516	2.35	2
Easily available	84 (38.18)	106 (48.18)	30 (13.64)	494	2.25	3
Economic price	86 (39.09)	87 (39.55)	47 (21.36)	479	2.18	4
More choice of brands	125 (56.82)	79 (35.91)	16 (7.27)	549	2.50	**1**
More variety of products	73 (33.18)	86 (39.09)	61 (27.73)	452	2.05	5

Source Primary Data

Table 3 Nature of product purchased on online

Variables	Very frequently	Frequently	Occasion	Sum	Mean	Rank
Fruits	91 (41.36)	71 (32.27)	58 (26.37)	473	2.15	3
Vegetables	123 (55.91)	75 (34.09)	22 (10.00)	541	2.46	**1**
Groceries	88 (40.00)	103 (46.82)	29 (13.18)	499	2.27	2
Others	90 (40.91)	72 (32.73)	58 (26.36)	472	2.15	3

Source Primary Data

Table 4 More products online than physically

Sl. No	Opinion	No. of respondents	Percentage
1	Always	90	40.91
2	Mostly	84	38.18
3	Occasionally	46	20.91
	Total	220	100

Source Primary Data

Table 5 Consumers awareness on social media, advertisement for organic products

Sl. No	Awareness	No. of respondents	Percentage
1	Aware	185	84.09
2	Not Aware	35	15.91
	Total	220	100

Source Primary Data

Table 5 shows that promotion is key to the success of any marketing activity. In this context, it has been observed that 84.09% of consumers are well aware of the online promotion of organic products, while 15.91% of the sample organic buyers were not aware.

Table 6 shows that popular social media sites browsed by organic food product buyers are Facebook (78%), Instagram (77.33%), YouTube (77%), Pinterest (74%), Twitter (73.33%), and other social media channels (69.66%) are listed as more visited social media channels.

Table 7 shows that satisfied consumers always have the intention of repurchasing the same brand and the same products again and again. At the same time, they also recommend the same product brands to others. Sample organic food product buyers are found to be satisfied with the organic product quality promoted through SMC (80.80%). Samples were found to be satisfied with online/SMC services like fast delivery of products (76.40%), discounts offered by online retail stores (71.80%), exchange/return policies (69.80%), and the safety of the products (64.40%).

Social media has the power to influence consumers' buying decisions. The trust and reliability of social media posts and information provided need inputs about a product and its characteristics for a potential consumer. Drawing a link with the

Table 6 Social media platform explored by the consumers

Variables	Very frequently	Frequently	Occasion	Sum	Mean	Rank
Facebook	97 (44.09)	101 (45.91)	22 (10.00)	515	2.34	**1**
Instagram	108 (49.09)	75 (34.09)	37 (16.82)	511	2.32	2
Twitter	109 (49.55)	46 (20.91)	65 (29.55)	484	2.20	5
YouTube	99 (45.00)	91 (41.36)	30 (13.64)	509	2.31	3
Pinterest	99 (45.00)	71 (32.27)	50 (22.73)	489	2.22	4
Others	73 (33.18)	94 (42.73)	53 (24.09)	460	2.09	6

Source Primary Data

Table 7 Satisfaction with online purchase of organic products

Variables	Highly satisfied	Satisfied	Neutral	Dissatisfied	Highly dissatisfied	Sum	Mean	Rank
Quality	81 (36.82)	93 (42.27)	25 (11.36)	15 (6.82)	6 (2.73)	888	4.04	**1**
Fast delivery	69 (31.96)	80 (36.36)	34 (15.45)	37 (16.83)	0 (0.00)	841	3.82	2
Exchange/ Return policy	31 (14.09)	97 (44.09)	52 (23.64)	29 (13.18)	11 (5.00)	768	3.49	4
Safety	39 (17.73)	57 (25.91)	60 (27.27)	41 (18.64)	23 (10.45)	708	3.22	5
Discounts	58 (26.36)	66 (30.00)	53 (24.09)	33 (15.00)	10 (4.55)	789	3.59	3

Source Primary Data

above-discussed review, the following hypotheses are framed that prove the feasibility of the SEM (Structural Equation Model). SEM attempts to find an association between consumers' preferences, awareness, and satisfaction towards the purchase of organic products in social media advertisements. The confirmation factor analysis is shown in Fig. 2.

Table 8 shows the CFA results, which are presented in Fig. 1. The fit indices indicate that the measure has a good fit overall. Based on these measurements, the result of the study shows that the proposed model has a good data fit χ^2 (CMIN) = 17.362 (p = 0.000), GFI = 0.968, AGFI = 0.915, TLI = 0.982, CFI = 0.924, NFI = 0.967, PNFI = 0.943, PCFI = 0.931, RFI = 0.942, IFI = 0.925, RMSEA = 0.001, indicative of a good fit, although not all of the values to the right of the observed variables represent standardized factor loadings (β), it is represented in the following Table 9.

Table 9 shows the association between consumers' preferences, awareness, and satisfaction with the purchase of organic products in social media advertisements. PROD versus PREF (β = 0.048, p = 0.000), PLAT versus PREF (β = 0.063, p

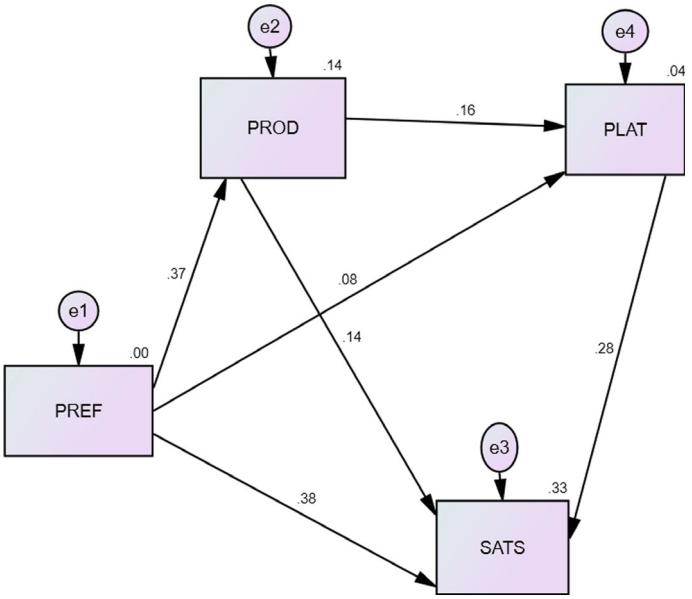

Fig. 2 Confirmatory factor analysis. Association between consumers' preference, awareness, and satisfaction toward purchase of organic products in social media advertisements. *Note* PREF-Preference, PROD-Product, PLAT- Platform and SATS-Satisfaction

= 0.026), PLAT versus PROD (β = 0.083, p = 0.029), SATS versus PREF (β = 0.037, p = 0.000), SATS versus PLAT (β = 0.040, p = 0.000), SATS versus PROD (β = 0.049, p = 0.025) are found to be positively correlated, and it is statistically significant. The hypotheses framed are accepted, and it has been concluded that (i) consumers' preference to purchase organic food products through online retail stores and the product they prefer to buy, (ii) the nature of organic food products purchased by the consumers and the social media platform they frequently like to view, and (iii) consumers prefer to buy organic products through online retail stores, the nature of the product purchased by them, the social media platform used by them, and their level of satisfaction towards organic products purchased online after reviewing SMC content.

Findings Made

At the end of the data assessment, it was found that 86.36% of the consumers purchase organic food products online, and 50.53% of the consumers have been buying these products for the past 1–5 years. The sample consumers greatly appreciated the availability of more organic food product brands online. The sample purchases more vegetables through online retail sites (82%). Over 84.09% of the samples are well aware of SMC promoting organic products. Facebook and Instagram were the popular SMC platforms browsed by the samples online, and organic product shoppers were

Table 8 Confirmatory factor analysis, chi-square result, and goodness of fit indices of the proposed model

Fit Indices	Obtained value	Accepted thresholds levels	Acceptable value
χ^2 (CMIN)	17.362	NA	NA
DF	6	NA	NA
P	0.000	NA	NA
Scaled χ^2/df	2.894	<0.05	<0.05
Goodness of Fit Index (GFI)	0.968	Value greater than 0.95	0–1
Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index (AGFI)	0.915	Value greater than 0.95	0–1
Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI)	0.982	Value greater than 0.95	0–1
Comparative Fit Index (CFI)	0.924	Value greater than 0.95	0–1
Normed Fit Index (NFI)	0.967	Value greater than 0.95	0–1
Parsimonious Normed Fit Index (PNFI)	0.943	0 = Poor fit, 1 = Good fit	0–1
Parsimonious Comparative Fit Index (PCFI)	0.931	0 = Poor fit, 1 = Good Fit	0–1
Relative Fit Index (RFI)	0.942	0 = Poor fit, 1 = Good Fit	0–1
Incremental Fit Index (IFI)	0.925	0 = Poor fit, 1 = Good fit	0–1
Root Mean Square Approximation Method (RMSEA)	0.001	The range between 0.05–0.08	0.05 or less would indicate a close fit of the model

Level of Significance: 5%
Minimization: 0.031
Miscellaneous: 0.585
Bootstrap: 0.000
Total: 0.616

found to be satisfied with the quality and the fast delivery of the products by online retailers.

Implication

As SMCs exercise a greater influence on transforming consumers to purchase various products online or through SMC, organic food product sellers have to actively

Table 9 Confirmatory factor analysis, path analysis structure, maximum likelihood–regression weightage

Path			Unstandardised estimates	Standardized estimates	S.E	C.R	P value	Relationship
PROD	<–	PREF	0.280	0.048	0.368	5.850	0.000	Significant
PLAT	<–	PREF	0.069	0.063	0.078	1.089	0.026	Significant
PLAT	<–	PROD	0.181	0.083	0.156	2.184	0.029	Significant
SATS	<–	PREF	0.237	0.037	0.381	6.376	0.000	Significant
SATS	<–	PLAT	0.200	0.040	0.284	5.022	0.000	Significant
SATS	<–	PROD	0.111	0.049	0.135	2.245	0.025	Significant

Level of Significance: 5%

promote their products through various popular and more used social media platforms. Online retailers are also suggested to promote various branded organic products, not restricted to vegetables or fruits. They have to start promoting organic processed food items (snacks, masala products, juices, and other beverages).

11 Limitations and Future Scope

The article is constructed with a very small population of just 220 organic food buyers, whereas Coimbatore city has a huge predictable population of 1,447,000 people. It is considered a limitation of this research work. The article authored contains only very limited information on the role SMC plays in influencing and persuading consumers to buy organic products either regularly or most. The above-mentioned shortcomings of this article provide more scope for future research to continue working/research this topic.

12 Conclusion

The study provides both theoretical and empirical evidence on the influences of social media on the purchase of organic food products. Computation of sample adequacy, reliability, and validity tests. The medium of promoting consumer products keeps on changing from one period to another, i.e., it has transferred from print media to digital to the modern-day satellite medium. Today, social media is a very important and strong promotional tool. Marketers are wisely using SMC to promote their niche products to a selected/chosen consumer group. As social media acts as a medium of posts, information sharing, demonstration reviews, and promotional tools, it supports consumers in making their product purchase decisions, i.e., right from product recognition to the end of the product purchase.

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