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University Students' Buying Behavior Towards Organic Food Products: At Gujarat University

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***Abstract*: The growing global concern for health, environmental sustainability, and food safety has significantly increased consumer interest in organic food products. A study investigates the factors influencing consumer buying behaviour toward organic food products among university students at Gujarat University—a key demographic representing young, educated, and socially aware consumers with emerging lifestyle preferences. This study explores consumer buying behaviour toward organic food products among Gujarat University students. Findings reveal that although students hold positive attitudes driven by health and environmental awareness, high prices, limited availability, and inadequate labelling hinder regular purchases. Most prefer fruits, vegetables, and grains, buying mainly from online platforms and supermarkets. While students are willing to pay 20–40% more for organic products, affordability remains a key concern. The study recommends awareness programs, subsidies, and improved access to promote sustainable organic consumption among youth.**

***Keywords*: organic food products, consumer buying behaviors, demographic factors.**

1. Introduction

Consumer buying behaviour toward organic food products has become an increasingly popular subject in recent years. Organic food is defined as products cultivated without synthetic pesticides, chemical fertilisers, or genetically modified organisms (GMOs), with an emphasis on organic production methods (Singh, 2017). Many customers believe that organic food is safer, healthier, and better for the environment than conventional food. Because of these factors, demand for organic products has grown globally, particularly in India (Expert Market Research, 2024).

However, actual consumer buying behavior may not necessarily correspond to customer opinions. Many customers believe that organic food is beneficial, yet just a small proportion of them purchase it regularly. This "attitude-behaviour gap" is particularly crucial in price-sensitive markets such as India (Sharma & Kumar, 2020). People are typically discouraged from purchasing organic products due to increased prices, a lack of clear labelling, questions regarding certification, and limited availability.

University students, especially those at Gujarat University, are an interesting group to study in these contexts. They are young, educated, and more exposed to new information through the internet and social media. They also care about health, fitness, and the environment, but they often face budget restrictions and depend on convenient options available in and around the campus. This makes their buying behaviour toward organic food a valuable subject for research.

2. Objectives of the Study

The primary objective of this study is to investigate the determinants of consumer buying behavior toward organic food products among university students. The study seeks to achieve the following specific objectives:

1. To evaluate university students' awareness and understanding of organic food products.
2. To determine how sociodemographic characteristics (such as age, gender, income) affect students' purchasing decisions for organic food products.
3. To explore university students' buying behaviour towards organic food products at Gujarat University.

3. Literature Review

A. Organic Food: Definitions and Core Characteristics

Organic food refers to agricultural products cultivated using environmentally friendly farming practices designed to preserve ecological balance, reduce pollution, and eliminate the use of synthetic fertilizers, pesticides, and genetically modified organisms. These practices emphasize sustainability and soil health while promoting biodiversity. Although certification processes, labeling requirements, and production standards vary across countries, their primary objective remains to assure consumers that the products comply with recognized organic principles (Hughner et al., 2007; Yiridoe et al., 2005). Consumers generally perceive organic food as healthier, safer, and more natural than conventional alternatives, as well as more beneficial for the environment. However, these perceptions and preferences tend to vary among different demographic and social groups, influencing the overall demand for organic products.

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B. The Indian Context and Gujarat-Specific Considerations

India's food system presents both opportunities and constraints for organic food diffusion. Rapid urbanisation, rising incomes, and greater exposure to global trends have increased demand for premium and differentiated food products in many Indian cities. Within states such as Gujarat, a combination of agricultural production strengths, market infrastructure in urban centres, and strong institutional ecosystems (including universities) make the state an informative case to study student consumption patterns. Gujarat University—a large public university with a diverse student body—provides a practical and policy-relevant setting to explore how young, educated consumers perceive and act on organic food choices.

C. University Students as a Target Segment

University students are at a crucial stage in life where they begin to form their own values, beliefs, and consumption habits. Although they often face challenges such as limited time, low income, and restricted availability of organic products on campus, they are more likely to be exposed to environmental and health-related information through their studies, social interactions, and media. Their choices to act on eco-friendly or health-conscious preferences are influenced by factors like peer pressure, the types of food offered in campus cafeterias, and the accessibility of organic products in nearby stores. Therefore, university students represent an important group for studying the difference between their positive attitudes toward organic food and their actual purchasing behavior.

4. Method of the Study

This study attempts to analyse university students of buying behavior towards organic food products with descriptive and analytical research method. There are total number of4000 students postgraduate and Ph.d students. Among them, 300 students are chosen by using Yamane sample size determination formula. To collect primary data, university students' who buy organic food products at Gujarat university are chosen with a structured questionnaire. The secondary data is gathered through relevant consumer behaviour textbooks, previous research papers, and internet websites.

5. Results and Analysis

A. Demographic Profiles

1) Gender

The following Table 1 shows the number of respondents by gender together with the respective percentage.

Table 1
Gender of respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	100	33.3
Female	200	66.7
Total	**300**	**100**

According to the Table 1, most respondents are female and they represent 66.7% of total respondents. The rest of them are male and that stands for 33.3% of total respondents.

2) Age

Respondents' ages are divided into four groups. The number of respondents by age group is shown in the following Table 2.

Table 2
Age of respondents

Age (Years)	No. of Respondents	Percentage
21-30	33	11.0
31-40	259	86.3
41-50	8	2.7
≥ 51 Year	-	
Total	**300**	**100**

According to the Table 2, most respondents are between 31-40 years old and there are 86.3 per cent of total respondents. The second largest numbers of respondents are between 21-30 years and it stands for 11 percent. The least number of respondents are between 41-50 years which represents 8 percent of total respondents.

3) Marital Status of Respondents

The following Table 3 shows the number of respondents by gender together with respective percentage.

Table 3
Marital status of respondents

Marital status	Frequency	Percentage
Married	27	9.0
Unmarried	273	91.
Total	**300**	**100**

According to Table 3, most respondents are unmarried, and they represent 91% of the total respondents. The rest of them are male and that stands for 9% of the total respondents.

4) Monthly Income

Monthly Income of respondents is studied by defining four groups and asking closed-ended questions in this study. The number of respondents by their monthly income is shown in the following Table 4.

Table 4
Monthly income

Monthly Income	Frequency	Percentage
≤Rs. 20,000	48	16.0
Rs20,001 & 30,000	229	76.4
Rs.30,001 &40,000	10	3.3
Rs. 40,001 & 50000	13	4.3
Total	**300**	**100**

According to the Table 4, most respondents earn between 20,001-30,000 kyats per month and it is 76 percent of total respondents. Second largest number of respondents earn under 20,000 and it is stand for 48 percent. Third largest number of respondents earn between 40,001-50,000kyat per month and which stands for 4.3 percent. The minimum number of respondents earn between 30,001 and 40,000 kyats which stands on 4.3 percent of total respondents.

6. Buying Behaviour Towards Organic Food Products

Respondents are divided into five groups that how often do you buy organic food products. The number of respondents in the following Table 5.

Table 5
Frequency of buying organic food products by respondents

Frequency of buying OFPs	Frequency	Percentage
Never	17	5.7
Rarely (Once a month)	115	38.3
Sometimes (2–3 times a month)	83	27.7
Frequently (Weekly)	78	26
Always (Daily)	7	2.3
Total	**300**	**100**

The table (5) presents the frequency with which respondents purchase organic food products. Among the 300 participants, the majority, 38.3% (115 respondents), reported that they rarely purchase organic food, typically once a month. This indicates that organic food buying behavior is occasional rather than habitual for most consumers.

The second largest group, 27.7% (83 respondents), stated that they purchase organic food sometimes (2–3 times a month), while 26% (78 respondents) reported frequent weekly purchases, suggesting a moderate level of consumer engagement with organic products. Only 2.3% (7 respondents) reported daily purchases, indicating that regular consumption of organic food is still limited among consumers.

A. Types of Organic Food Products

There are seven groups of organic food products by choosing respondents.

Table 6
Types of organic food products

Types of organic food products	Frequency	Percentage
Fruits & Vegetables	88	29.3
Dairy Products	57	19.0
Grains & Pulses	73	24.3
Dry Spices & Dry fruits	31	10.3
Organic processed food	31	10.3
Poultry products	19	6.3
Packaged snacks & beverages	1	0.3
Total	**300**	**100**

The table 6 shows the types of organic food products purchased or preferred by respondents out of a total sample of 300 participants. The results indicate that Fruits & Vegetables are the most commonly purchased organic food products, accounting for 29.3% (88 respondents). This highlights the high consumer demand for fresh and chemical-free produce, as fruits and vegetables form a staple part of most diets.

The second most popular category is Grains & Pulses with 24.3% (73 respondents), suggesting that consumers are increasingly opting for organic staples in their regular cooking needs. Dairy Products are also widely consumed, representing 19% (57 respondents), which may reflect growing awareness of hormone-free and chemical-free dairy options.

Finally, Packaged Snacks & Beverages were the least preferred, with only 0.3% (1 respondent), suggesting minimal consumer inclination towards processed or ready-to-eat organic options.

B. Places

Places are critical factors when respondents decide to buy or organic food products. There are four groups of places in the following table 7.

Table 7
Places

Where to buy	Frequency	Percentage
Supermarkets	102	34.0
Organic specialty stores	40	13.3
Online platforms	141	47.6
Farmers' markets	17	5.7
Total	**300**	**100**

The table 7 presents the preferred places where consumers buy organic food products. Out of 300 respondents, the majority, 47.6% (141 respondents), reported purchasing organic products through online platforms. This suggests that e-commerce has become a dominant channel for organic food purchases, likely due to its convenience, variety, and home delivery options.

The second most preferred option is supermarkets, chosen by 34% (102 respondents), indicating that large retail stores remain an important source for organic products, as they provide both accessibility and product diversity under one roof.

Only 13.3% (40 respondents) purchase from organic specialty stores, showing that while these stores cater to niche health-conscious consumers, they are not the main buying source for most people.

Lastly, farmers' markets are the least preferred option, with only 5.7% (17 respondents) buying from them. This could be due to limited availability, accessibility issues, or lack of awareness about such markets.

C. Willing to Pay on Organic Food Products

There are four groups of willing to pay by buying organic food producers in the table 8.

Table 8
Willing to pay on organic food products

Willing to pay	Frequency	Percentage
0% to 20%	102	34.0
20% to 40%	160	53.3
40% to 60%	37	12.3
60% to 80%	1	3
Total	**300**	**100**

The table 8 presents respondents' willingness to pay a price premium for organic food products. Out of 300 participants, the majority, 53.3% (160 respondents), indicated that they are willing to pay 20% to 40% more for organic products compared to conventional alternatives. This suggests a moderate but significant price sensitivity, where most consumers value the benefits of organic products but still consider affordability an important factor.

The second-largest group, 34% (102 respondents), expressed willingness to pay only 0% to 20% more, showing that a considerable portion of consumers prefers minimal price differences and may be reluctant to pay a high premium despite recognizing the benefits of organic food.

A smaller group, 12.3% (37 respondents), was open to paying 40% to 60% more, indicating a niche segment of highly health- or quality-conscious consumers who prioritize organic food regardless of cost.

Only 0.3% (1 respondent) reported being willing to pay 60% to 80% more, suggesting that very few consumers are ready to pay extremely high premiums for organic products.

D. Maximum Expenditures

This study examines the maximum expenditure on organic food products by respondents, categorised into four distinct groups. The number of respondents by their maximum expenditure is shown in the table 9.

Table 9
Monthly expenditure of respondents

Monthly expenditures	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
≤ ₹1,000	126	42
₹1,001 – ₹2,500	129	43
₹2,501 – ₹5,000	29	9.7
₹5,001 – ₹7,500	16	5.3
Total	**300**	**100**

The table 9 shows the monthly expenditures on organic food products among 300 respondents. The majority, 43% (129 respondents), spend between ₹1,001 and ₹2,500 per month, indicating that most consumers maintain a moderate spending level on organic food products.

The second-largest group, 42% (126 respondents), spends up to ₹1,000 per month, suggesting that a considerable proportion of consumers limit their organic food purchases to lower budget categories, possibly due to price sensitivity or occasional buying behavior.

Only 9.7% (29 respondents) reported spending ₹2,501–₹5,000, while 5.3% (16 respondents) spend ₹5,001–₹7,500, indicating that higher expenditure on organic food remains uncommon and is restricted to a small segment of the population.

7. Conclusions and Suggestions

The survey found that Gujarat University students have positive attitudes regarding organic food products, which are mostly motivated by health and environmental concerns. However, price sensitivity, limited purchasing power, and limited availability prevent these positive attitudes from resulting in consistent purchasing behaviour. The data also show that digital platforms and modern retail are influencing the organic food sector more than conventional shops. For organic food products to become more popular among students, pricing, accessibility, and awareness must be increased.

To bridge this gap, organic food products must be made more affordable and accessible for students. Universities can collaborate with organic producers to provide on-campus stalls and discounted student packages. Digital platforms and social media should be leveraged to strengthen awareness and trust through transparent labelling and certification. Producers should diversify product categories, including affordable organic snacks and ready-to-eat options suited to student lifestyles. Policymakers should support subsidies and simplify certification systems to ensure both affordability and authenticity. By addressing affordability, awareness, and trust, organic food consumption can become a sustainable lifestyle choice among students.

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