

An Analytical Study of Economic & Demographic Factors affecting the Awareness & Purchase of Organic Foods in Meerut City.

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Abstract

Purpose- The purpose of this paper is to analyze the impact of various economic and demographic factors (income, gender, educational background & occupation) on the awareness and purchase of organic food products (F&V, Dairy Foods, Groceries) in Meerut City (U.P.). It has also highlighted the perception of high prices with importance of marketing and promotional strategies for organic foods in Meerut City.

Design/Methodology/Approach- The paper employs exploratory research design with quantitative approach. The primary data has been collected from 360 people (valid responses 300) of Meerut City through the questionnaire (Google Form). Data thus collected has been refined edited, coded, classified and finally subjected to tabular & graphical representation and descriptive & inferential statistics (ANOVA, Independent Sample T test) through SPSS Version 20. Inferential statistics has been demonstrated widely as a part of this research paper.

Findings- The findings exhibits that there is a significant difference in the awareness level of people regarding the availability, nutritional value, overall quality and overall benefits of organic foods in Meerut city across their 'Income', 'Occupation' and 'Educational Qualification'. However no significant difference has been observed for the same across their 'Gender'. Organic foods are priced comparatively 'Higher' and 'Marketing & Promotional Strategies' are highly important for Organic Foods related to Meerut City.

Practical Implication- Meerut City in western UP is one the economic, industrial and educational hub in north India with overall expected growth in 10% in GDP and city population of 23 lakhs (2020) approximately. Meerut City is a part of NCR (National Capital Region) and the penetration of all consumer products, goods and services are very high. Therefore the study of organic foods has been practically viable for Meerut City.

Originality/Value- This paper is original as it is the primary study regarding the awareness and purchase of organic foods in 'Meerut City' and it adds value for the further study of consumption patterns, purchase intentions, consumer awareness, products attributes and qualities, estimating market share and growth etc regarding organic foods.

Keywords - Organic Foods, Purchase, Awareness, Respondent.

JEL Classification- M31

Paper Type – Research Paper

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1. Introduction:

Organic food products are extremely healthy in nature and are stocked with plenty of minerals and vitamins. These foods can be fruits and vegetables, dairy and confectionary products, groceries etc. These foods have no apparent pesticides and fertilizers mixed with them. Organic foods are that foods which are 100% authentic in nature with no added flavors and other things. Exposing food to pesticides lessens its nutritive value and thus makes it dry and lifeless by the time it reaches the customers doorstep. The price of organic food is slightly higher than other ready-made or pesticide driven food items as more time is invested in making them. Being the consumers are more and more information savvy and health conscious, the knowledge, purchase & consumption of organic foods has been on increasing trends throughout. Especially the trend in metropolitan cities has been more transparent as compared to non metros. Organic farming is one of the most captivating professions nowadays to exploit the immense potential of the market.

2. Literature Review:

Several studies were conducted in Indian Financial markets regarding Derivatives, some of the important studies are as follows:

- According to **S. Suganya and Dr. S. Saravinth (2014)** in their research concluded that it is evident that people's awareness towards organic products has increased considerably and they are willing to purchase the organic products if it is affordable and available.
- According to **Sathyendra Kumar AD, Dr. H. M. Chandrashekar (2015)** consumer behavior plays the major role while buying not only organic product any product. So, the organic food shops and product supply is limited but demand for it, is more. So, the farmers and also the government are thinking to improve or increase production of organic product as well as good packaging, quality and market system. It helps to improve the standard of living farmer and all it healthy to environment and all so it helps to government. The marketers of organic foods need to be innovative and dynamic in order to compete with the changing purchase behavior in the Organic food products market among urban residents.
- **Vishal Kumar Laheri, Purushottam Kumar Arya (2015)** has stated that, the results of the survey suggested that there is a need for organizing many awareness programs by the government, marketers, and environmental agencies to educate consumers for using eco-friendly products, which are good for their health and at the same time safe for the environment. As per the results of the survey, the price and availability of the organic products are the prime barriers towards its purchase, so the marketers need to focus on such barriers for penetrating the market of organic products in India.
- According to **K. Renugadevi & Dr. M. Ramya (2017)** Organic food product is been accepted as a nutritional food and helps to keep human healthy in spite of busy work schedule, stress and pollution. The short supply and premium price of organic products may disturb the growth of consumption rate.
- As per study of **Konda Kalyani (2017)** "The system of organic agriculture, especially the system of organic food production, becomes more and more important factor of national and international economic system development. The importance of organic food marketing is conditioned by the fact that it enables producers for better understanding of customers' needs serving the purpose of better meeting their needs and it also enables consumers to realize better organic products supply.
- **Nayana Sharma and Dr. Ritu Singhvi (2018)** study also revealed the availability of the market can influence consumer's preferences and choices for purchasing organic food products. This paper thus provides vital information that there will be more demand of the organically grown food products in coming future, so it's high time for producer, traders, consumer and government itself to focus over the niche market of organic.

They explained the factors determining consumer's acceptance and preference for food in general. Many factors combine and interact to make buying a complex process. Price was identified as an important factor; however it had some limitations on the consumer's choice. Factors like sensory attributes regional preference, age, sex, interest, motivation, discrimination and income also influenced food consumption.

- **Anwasha Chattopadhyay & Priyanka Khanzode(2019)** conducted an empirical study regarding the awareness and consumption patterns of organic foods in Bengaluru and stated that the consumption of organic foods in the Bengaluru had increased lately although more awareness should be created to make the consumption more popular among consumers. This study has been the most recent and relevant pertaining to the need and perspective for this research paper.

3. Gap Analysis, Need & Scope of the Study:

In the purview of literature review it can be analysed that however various studies regarding organic foods had been conducted based on primary data but mostly confined to metropolitan cities only. Meerut City in western UP is one the economic, industrial and educational hub in north India with overall expected growth in 10% in GDP and city population of 23lakhs (2020) approximately. Meerut City is an integral part of NCR and the penetration of all consumer products, goods and services are very high in Meerut. Therefore there is an intense need to conduct a study related to Meerut City for studying awareness and purchase of organic foods. Organic foods industry being growing at a phenomenal rate, so the scope is very wide as far as consumption and purchase of the products is concerned.

4. Objectives of the Study:

- To study the impact of age, occupation, Income and Gender on the awareness and purchase of organics foods in Meerut City.
- To study the impact of high prices on the purchase of organic foods in Meerut City.
- To study the importance of marketing and promotional strategies among for organic foods in Meerut City.

5. Research Methodology:

5.1 Research Design is Exploratory being the researcher explores the impact of various economical & demographical factors affecting the awareness level and purchase intention of people regarding organic foods (F&V, Dairy Products & Dairy Products) in Meerut City.

5.2 Research Approach is Quantitative in nature as the close ended responses received by the respondents have been analysed.

5.3 Research Hypothesis:

H01: There is no significant difference in the awareness level of people regarding the availability, nutritional value, overall quality and overall benefits of organic foods across their 'Income'.

H02: There is no significant difference in the awareness level of people regarding the availability, nutritional value, overall quality and overall benefits of organic foods across their 'Occupation'.

H03: There is no significant difference in the awareness level of people regarding the availability, nutritional value, overall quality and overall benefits of organic foods across their 'Educational Qualification'.

H04: There is no significant difference in the awareness level of people regarding the availability, nutritional value, overall quality and overall benefits of organic foods across their 'Gender'.

5.4 Data Collection method is "Primary" as around 360 people were contacted through whatsapp and Email (Google form posted at various groups) in Meerut City. Out of 360 responses, finally 300 valid (complete in all respects with no missing values) responses have been considered.

5.5 Sampling frame and Sample Unit consisted of residents of Meerut City taken all together. Geographical classification of the respondents has not been done, however researcher tried to obtain the response either from one Male or Female member of the family (sample unit) who is

the decision maker for the purchase of daily household needs for the family.

5.6 **Sample Size of total 360 people** had been taken for conducting the research. Sample size is calculated by the formula:

$S = \frac{X^2 NP(1-P)}{d^2(N-1)} + \frac{X^2 P(1-P)}{d^2}$, Where S is the sample size, N is the population size, p is the population proportion, d is the degree of accuracy expressed as a proportion, and X₆₂ is the table value of chi square for 1 degree of freedom at the desired confidence level (95% usually).

As **Krejcie & Morgan (1970)** suggests that the sample size of around 400 respondents for the population of more than one lakh size. Since the study region is Meerut City, total **sample size was 360 respondents, out of which 300 respondents** provided the clear and valid responses.

5.7 **Sampling Method is “Convenience Sampling Method”** observing the easy availability of respondents. Even the ‘**Snowball Sampling**’ method is also used where references of the whatsapp group have been taken to receive the responses.

5.8 **Survey Instrument is ‘Structured Questionnaire’** having close ended questions for the ease of respondents (Google Form). The organisation of questionnaire has been divided into two parts as follows:

- **Economic and Demographic factors:** Respondents have been asked for their Name, Address, Gender, Income, Occupation and Educational Qualifications. ‘Age’ as a demographic factor has not been considered because respondents are mostly the family persons or the students at least UG classes and above (18 to 40 years). For Name and Address open ended question is used and for other fields in this part Nominal and Ratio scales were used.
- **Awareness, Pricing & Importance of Marketing and Promotional Strategies:** For knowing the awareness level, ‘Likert Scale’ has been used for recording responses among the four attributes (Availability, Nutritional Value, Overall Quality and Overall benefits) of organic foods and similarly for Pricing and Importance of Marketing & Promotional Strategies other scales were used. It was assumed that all the respondents are truly aware of organic foods.

5.8 **Time frame of the study is five months – November 2020 to March 2021**

5.9 **Data Analysis Technique** – After collecting responses from 360 people, 300 valid responses had been considered. Data has been edited, refined, coded and modified in a proper manner. **Tabular & Graphical representation (Bar Chart)** of data has been performed after calculating the required frequencies. Further, the data has been subjected to descriptive analysis and hypothesis of testing (inferential statistics) for reaching at the conclusion. **ANOVA and Independent samples ‘t’ test** have been used as statistical techniques for testing the hypothesis. **Microsoft EXCEL and SPSS Version 20** have been used for analysing the data.

6. Data Analysis & Findings (Hypothesis Testing):

6.1 Gender of the Respondents:

Table 6.1 Gender of the Respondents

Gender	Frequency	% Age
Male	139	46%
Female	161	54%
Total	300	100

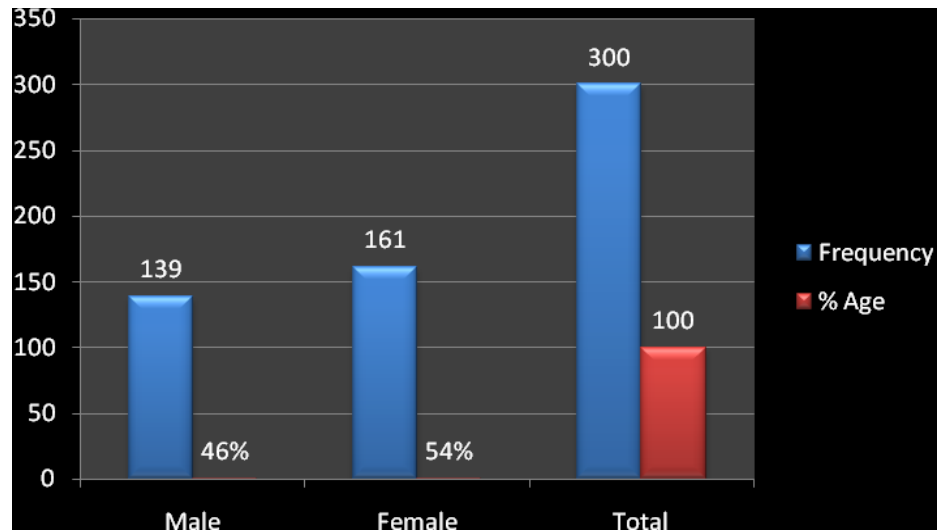


Figure 6.1 Gender of the Respondents

6.2 Occupation of the Respondents:

Five classes of occupation are considered in particular like students, business, professional, employed and other occupation for the investigation. The details are given beneath.

Table 6.2 Occupation of the Respondents

Occupation	Frequency	%Age
Students	35	12%
Business	65	22%
Professional	70	23%
Employed	95	31%
Others	35	12%
Total	300	100

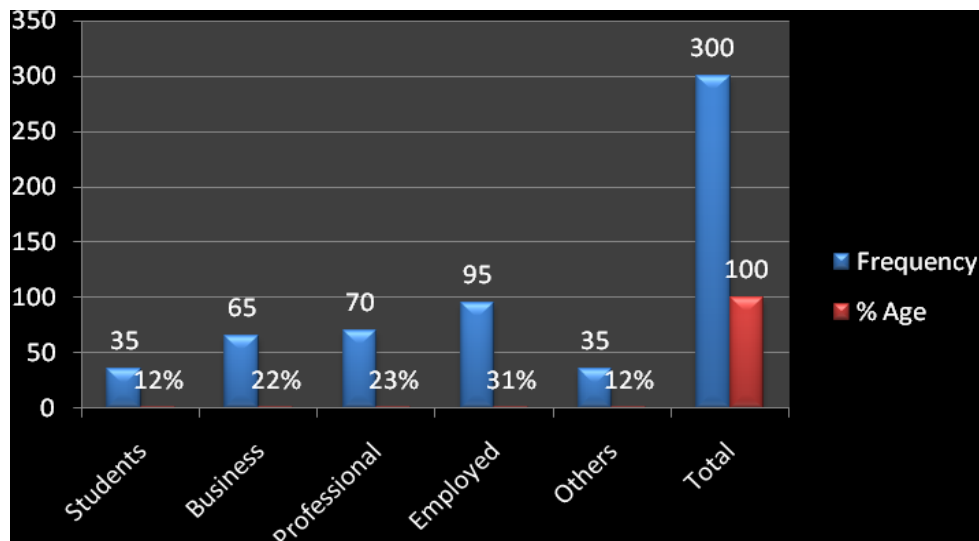


Figure 6.2 Occupation of the Respondents

6.3 Educational Qualification of the Respondents:

Four levels of educational qualification are considered for the examination. They are school level, graduate, post graduate level and others.

Table 6.3 Educational Qualification of the Respondents

Educational Qualifications	Frequency	%
School Level	15	5%
Under Graduate	90	30%
Post Graduate	135	45%
Others	60	20%
Total	300	100

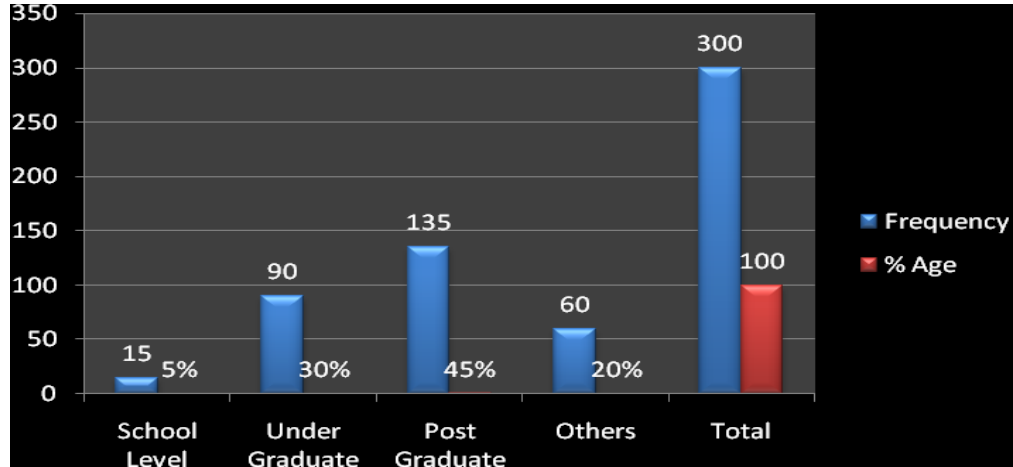


Figure 6.3 Educational Qualifications of the Respondents

6.4 Monthly Income of the Respondents:

Table 6.4 Monthly Income of the Respondents

Monthly Income	Frequency	%
Below Rs. 20,000	38	13%
Rs. 20,001 – 30,000	70	23%
Rs. 30,001 – 40,000	109	36%
Above Rs. 40,000	83	28%
Total	300	100

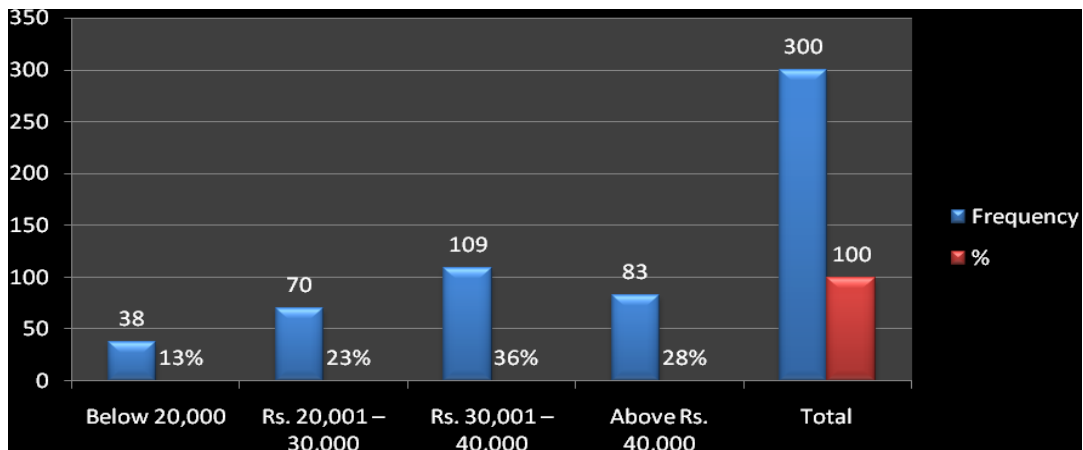


Figure 6.4 Monthly Income of the Respondents

6.5 Awareness Level of Organic Foods:

This segment endeavors to judge the awareness level of organic foods and testing the various hypothesis based on the same.

Table 6.5(a) Awareness Level of Organic Foods

	Not aware	Less aware	Aware	Fairly aware	Fully aware	Total
Availability	10	20	70	100	100	300
	3%	7%	24%	33%	33%	100%
Nutritional Value	50	40	80	60	70	300
	17%	13%	27%	20%	23%	100%
Overall Quality	30	40	60	95	75	300
	10%	13%	20%	32%	25%	100%
Overall Benefits	50	61	72	67	50	300
	17%	20%	24%	22%	17%	100%

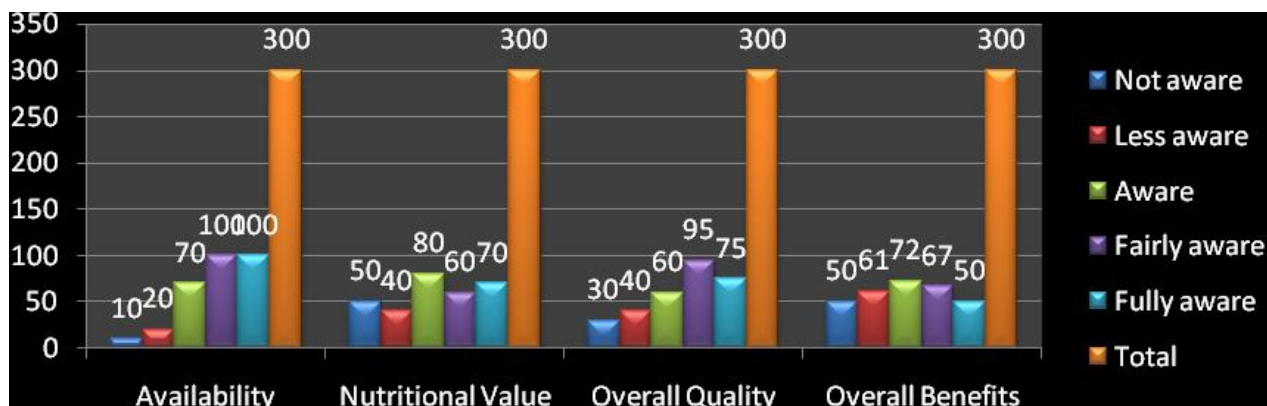
**Figure 6.5 Awareness Level of Organic Foods in Meerut City**

Table 6.5(a) demonstrates the number of respondents falling under various levels of awareness concerning distinctive attributes of organic foods. 3% don't know from availability, 7% are less aware, 24% aware, 33% are fairly aware and 33% are fully aware, 17% don't know from nutritional value, 13% are less aware, 27% know, 20% are fairly aware and 23% are fully aware, 10% don't know from overall quality, 13% are less aware, 20% know, 32% are fairly aware and 25% are fully aware, 17% don't know from overall benefits, 20% are less aware, 24% know, 22% are fairly aware and 17% are fully aware

Following table 6.5(b) exhibits the enlightening insights of awareness levels of people. Awareness level of people can be deciphered utilizing mean score. Five point scales is utilized to gauge awareness. Score of 1 for not aware to 5 for highly aware is utilized among four categories as referenced in the frequency table above are recognized for concentrate the awareness of respondents. The average score, least and greatest score of respondents are given underneath

Table 6.5(b) Awareness Levels of Organic Foods – Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Variance	Std. Deviation
Awareness Score	300	140	295	240	6938.5	83.297

Awareness of organic foods fluctuates from 140 to 295 with a mean score of 240 and a standard deviation of 83.297. In a 5 point scale beginning from not aware to fully aware with scores 1 to 5 and with 5 factors, a mean score of 240 demonstrates that the people are fairly aware about the attributes of organic foods however not fully aware. Minimum level is 140 which mean less aware and maximum level is 295 which implies fully aware.

6.5.1 Awareness Level of Organic Foods across the 'Income':

H01: There is no significant difference in the awareness level of people regarding the availability, nutritional value, overall quality and overall benefits of organic foods across their 'Income'.

For testing the hypothesis one way ANOVA is used.

Table 6.5.1 ANOVA table -Awareness Level of Organic Foods across the 'Income'.						
		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Availability	Between Groups	53.947	4	13.487	14.173	0.000
	Within Groups	280.719	295	0.953		
	Total	334.666	299			
Nutritional Value	Between Groups	22.594	4	5.648	3.055	0.017
	Within Groups	545.406	295	1.849		
	Total	568	299			
Overall Quality	Between Groups	23.221	4	5.805	3.709	0.006
	Within Groups	461.696	295	1.565		
	Total	484.917	299			
Overall Benefits	Between Groups	50.189	4	12.547	7.749	0.000
	Within Groups	477.691	295	1.619		
	Total	527.88	299			

It is clear from the table since calculated p value is less than 0.05 hence it can be stated that:

H01 (Null hypothesis 1) is rejected. It means there is significant difference in the awareness level of people regarding the availability, nutritional value, overall quality and overall benefits of organic foods across their 'Income'.

6.5.2 Awareness level of Organic Foods across the 'Occupation':

H02: There is no significant difference in the awareness level of people regarding the availability, nutritional value, overall quality and overall benefits of organic foods across their 'Occupation'.

For testing the hypothesis one way ANOVA is used.

Table 6.5.2 ANOVA table -Awareness Level of Organic Foods across the 'Occupation'						
		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Availability	Between Groups	166.807	4	41.702	73.288	0.000
	Within Groups	167.860	295	.569		
	Total	334.666	299			
Nutritional Value	Between Groups	67.573	4	16.893	9.959	0.000
	Within Groups	500.427	295	1.696		
	Total	568	299			
Overall Quality	Between Groups	93.208	4	23.302	17.549	0.000
	Within Groups	391.709	295	1.328		
	Total	484.917	299			
Overall Benefits	Between Groups	74.144	4	18.536	12.051	0.000
	Within Groups	453.736	295	1.538		
	Total	527.88	299			

It is clear from the table since calculated p value is less than 0.05 hence it can be stated that:

H02 (Null hypothesis 2) is rejected. It means that there is significant difference in the awareness level of people regarding the availability, nutritional value, overall quality and overall benefits of organic foods across their ‘Occupation’.

6.5.3 Awareness Level of Organic Foods across the ‘Educational Qualification’:

H03: There is no significant difference in the awareness level of people regarding the availability, nutritional value, overall quality and overall benefits of organic foods across their ‘Educational Qualification’.

For testing the hypothesis one way ANOVA is used.

Table 6.5.3 ANOVA table -Awareness Level of Organic Foods across the ‘Educational Qualification’						
		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Availability	Between Groups	24.885	3	18.536	12.051	0.000
	Within Groups	453.736	296	1.538		
	Total	334.666	299			
Nutritional Value	Between Groups	21.491	3	7.164	3.880	0.010
	Within Groups	546.509	296	1.846		
	Total	568	299			
Overall Quality	Between Groups	19.750	3	6.583	4.189	0.006
	Within Groups	465.167	296	1.572		
	Total	484.917	299			
Overall Benefits	Between Groups	19.074	3	6.358	3.699	0.012
	Within Groups	508.806	296	1.719		
	Total	527.88	299			

It is clear from the table since calculated p value is less than 0.05 hence it can be stated that:

H03 (Null hypothesis 3) is rejected. It means that there is significant difference in the awareness level of people regarding the availability, nutritional value, overall quality and overall benefits of organic foods across their ‘Educational Qualification’.

6.5.4 Awareness Level of Organic Foods across the ‘Gender’:

H04: There is no significant difference in the awareness level of people regarding the availability, nutritional value, overall quality and overall benefits of organic foods across their ‘Gender’.

For testing the hypothesis independent samples T-test is used.

Table 6.5.4 T-test for Equality of Means (when equal variances not assumed)							
	T	Df	Sig.(2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval	
						Lower	Upper
Availability	0.740	274.247	0.941	-0.009	0.123	-0.252	0.233
Nutritional Value	0.343	276.620	0.732	0.055	0.160	-0.260	0.370
Overall Quality	1.273	282.742	0.204	-0.186	0.146	-0.474	0.102

Overall Benefits	1.217	285.705	0.225	-0.185	0.152	-0.485	0.114
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It is clear from the table since calculated p value is greater than 0.05 hence it can be stated that: **H04 (Null hypothesis 4) is accepted.** It means that there is no significant difference in the awareness level of people regarding the availability, nutritional value, overall quality and overall benefits of organic foods across their 'Gender'.

6.6 Importance of Marketing and Promotional Strategies for Organic Foods in Meerut City

Below table and figure stated the importance of Marketing and Promotional Strategies required for Organic Foods in Meerut City.

Table 6.6(a) Importance of Marketing and Promotional Strategies for Organic Foods.

Factors	No. of Respondents	% age
Crucial	51	17
Important	118	39.3
Average	61	20.3
Not much importance	42	14
Not important at all	28	9.3
Total	300	100

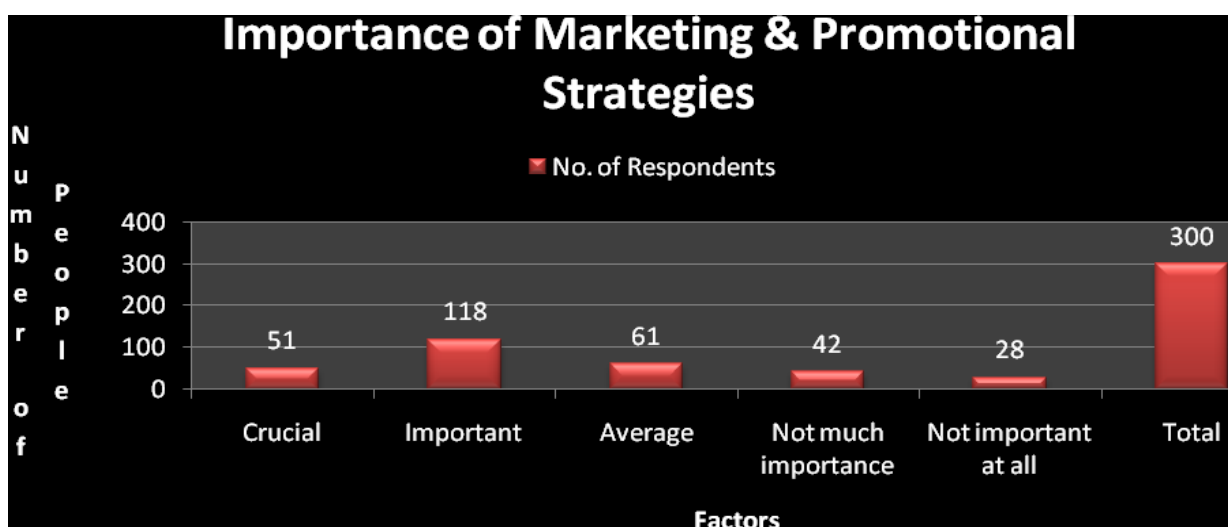


Figure 6.6 Importance of Marketing and Promotional strategies

From above table it is stated that most of the people have agreed that there is a requirement of marketing and promotional strategies for inducing the purchase of organic foods in Meerut city.

Table 6.6(b) Marketing & Promotional Strategies – Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Variance	Std. Deviation
Marketing & Promotional strategies	300	28	118	60	1198.5	34.619

Marketing & Promotional Strategies fluctuate from with a mean score of 60 and a standard deviation of 34.619. In a 5 point scale beginning from crucial to not at all important with scores 1 to 5, with 5 factors and 300 respondents, a mean score of 60 demonstrates that the people think marketing strategies are important for organic foods in Meerut City.

6.7 Perception regarding 'High Prices' of Organic Foods in Meerut City:

This section endeavors to judge the people perception regarding the ‘High Prices’ of Organic Foods in Meerut City. Below table and figure stated demonstrated the same.

Table 6.7 High Prices of Organic Foods in Meerut City

Organic Foods are highly priced as compared to normal food	Frequency	% Age
Strongly Agree	77	26%
Agree	116	39%
Neutral	32	11%
Disagree	42	13%
Strongly Disagree	33	11%
Total	300	100

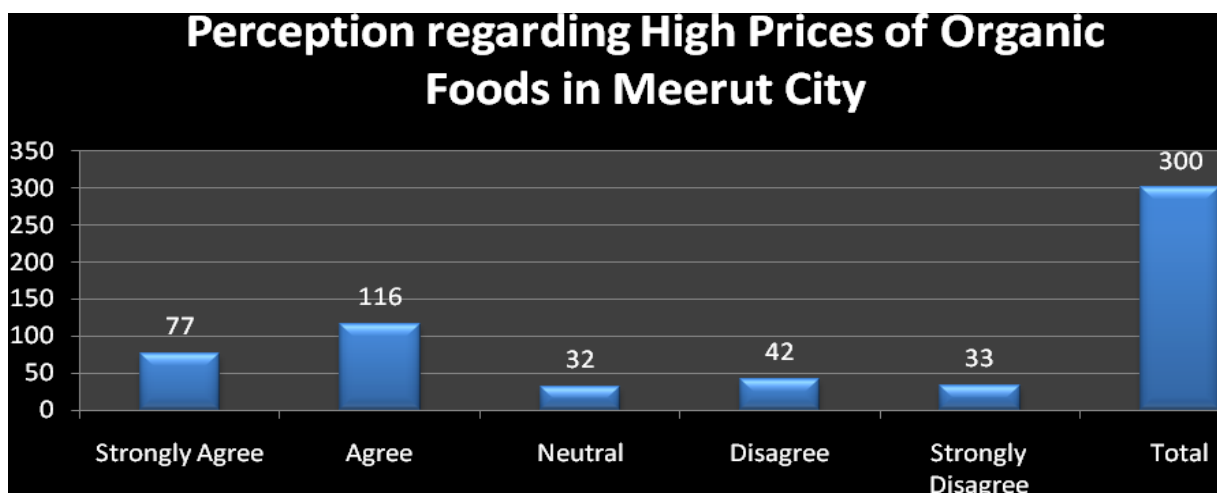


Figure 6.7 Perception regarding High prices of Organic Foods

The above table shows the perception of respondents regarding the high prices of organic foods in Meerut city. Out of 300, 116 respondents agree for the same, which indicated that organic foods are bit highly priced as compared to normal foods.

7. Suggestions & Recommendations:

1. Proper education and in depth knowledge regarding organic foods pertaining to their benefits, advantages, nutritional value, easy availability, home delivery options etc should be provided to the people of Meerut City.
2. Changing the mindset of people regarding the purchase and consumption of organic foods is definitely a need of an hour for the organic food retailers/manufactures of Meerut City.
3. Organic Foods manufactures and retailers in Meerut City must restructure their marketing initiatives so that they can exploit the immense market potential in better way.
4. The impact of high prices versus the quality of organic foods must be truly acknowledged by the people of organic foods.
5. Most of the people are from high educational background for high income group for organic foods; therefore it is an enormous opportunity for organic food retailers to penetrate in the other consumer segments as well.

8. Conclusion:

Organic foods market has been growing at a phenomenal rate over the past few years and even in the cities like Meerut, the penetration level is high as far as awareness and purchase intentions for the same is concerned. Advances in social media, improvements in Information technology, online marketing and advertisement, health consciousness, quality orientation, higher disposable income, healthy life style significantly expanded leveraging opportunities for organic foods

manufacturers/retailers to exploit the potential. These products contribute to the development of a more healthy and nutritional based lifestyle of people. However the organic foods market in Meerut is not as developed when compared to the other metropolitan cities in terms of exact purchase value or volume though the people are aware and also want to purchase and consume the organic products. Therefore one to one communication and personal database marketing is required for making people accustom for organic food products in Meerut.

9. Limitations:

- Survey is limited to Meerut city and the period of study is short.
- Research is based on convenience and snowball sampling.
- Respondents sometimes have been reluctant to provide clear responses and it is not a very extensive and detailed research.
- Concrete responses are difficult to obtain as of now because COVID 2.0 is on peak and customers are not very keen to purchase only organic foods.
- All the responses were collected through the online Google form especially shared on whatsapp groups of the people.
- One of the major limitations is online purchase of organic foods which has not been considered in the study.

10. Scope for Further Research:

Further research in the same domain for the similar product category can be done mode widely and with the random sampling plan across the Delhi and NCR. More details questionnaire with inclusion of open ended questions as well will be able to provide minute analysis pertaining to organic foods. Even the secondary data pertaining to organic foods can be analyzed to study the more detailed qualitative aspects of the organic foods. Even the research can be conducted from the viewpoint of sellers of organic foods.

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