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Consumers' Willingness to Pay a Premium for Organic Vegetables: A Quantitative Analysis of Influencing Factors

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Abstract: The increasing prevalence of global health disorders and the daily degradation of the environment have forced people all over the world to consider how to best use resources, including the global food production and consumption process. The increasing awareness of the health advantages of organic food, heightened consciousness about the health risks linked to chemical pesticides and fertilisers, and rising investments by Indian corporations in agritech, agribusinesses, and organic farming are significant factors propelling the market. The aim of this study is to investigate the relationship between the income of consumers and their willingness to pay a premium for organic vegetables and to examine the factors influencing the consumers' willingness to pay a premium for organic food products. The researchers used a quantitative research design, taking 320 sample respondents from Delhi-NCR, India. IBM SPSS software was used to analyse the data by applying descriptive analysis, correlation analysis, and multiple regression analysis. The research indicates that the nutritional advantages of organic vegetables and customers' environmental awareness are primary determinants of the willingness to pay a premium, while factors such as income, health awareness, and the quality of organic vegetables have a minimal impact.

Keywords: *Organic Food, Organic Vegetables, Willingness to Pay, Nutrition, Health Consciousness.*

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I. INTRODUCTION

The increasing prevalence of global health disorders and the daily degradation of the environment have forced people all over the world to consider how to best use resources, including the global food production and consumption process (Ansari & Khan, 2024). Over the past ten years, there has been a significant increase in the consumption of organic vegetables (Pieniak et al., 2010). The size of the organic food market in India reached USD 1,582.2 million in 2023. IMARC Group anticipates the market will attain US$8,918.5 million by 2032, demonstrating a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 21.19% from 2024 to 2032 (*IMARC Group*, 2024). The increasing awareness of the health advantages of organic food, heightened consciousness about the health risks linked to chemical pesticides and fertilisers, and rising investments by Indian corporations in agritech, agribusinesses, and organic farming are significant factors propelling the market. Due to the rise in customer demand, numerous food retail establishments, including traditional supermarkets and mass merchandisers, have incorporated organic fruits and vegetables into their inventory, thereby enhancing consumer access to organic produce.

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In recent years, the agro-food system has focused on cross-cutting issues including food safety, production traceability, product quality, environmental respect, and human resources. Consequently, production systems are increasingly adopting sustainable approaches. The swift advancement of the industrial vegetable business in India has resulted in the indiscriminate disposal of waste materials, including roots, stems, leaves, and decayed fruit, leading to significant environmental contamination issues. Composting technique for vegetable waste, capable of transforming refuse into organic fertiliser, has lately emerged as a substantially cleaner production method (Esposito et al., 2020).

In recent years, consumer demand for a wide range of handy veggies, including both organic and conventional types, has increased significantly. As a result, new specialist varieties, such as grape tomatoes, have been developed, and retailers now provide a wide array of organic vegetables year-round (Dettmann & Dimitri, 2009). In addition to nutrients, fruits, and vegetables may also harbour undesirable chemicals such as environmental pollutants (e.g., nitrates, pesticide residues) and pathogenic bacteria (together with their metabolites). Fruits and Vegetables are a significant source of dietary fibre, minerals, vitamins, trace elements, and a wide range of healthful phytochemicals. These vegetables may also contain less desirable components, such as pathogenic bacteria (and their metabolites) and environmental pollutants (such as nitrates and pesticide residues), in addition to nutrients (Hoefkens et al., 2009). One of the main reasons for the rise in demand for organic fruits and vegetables is thought to be growing customer worries about the safety and quality of meals because of the presence of these dangerous pollutants (Magkos et al., 2003) because the organic fruits and vegetables are produced without the use of any chemical synthesis materials. The current study investigates the different influencing factors that drive consumers to a pay premium for organic vegetables in Delhi-NCR India.

II. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To study the demographic characteristics of consumers toward organic vegetables
- To evaluate the relationship between income levels and willingness to pay a premium for organic vegetables
- To examine the role of factors influencing consumers ' willingness to pay a premium for organic vegetables

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

Research from various regions highlights the increasing consumer interest in organic vegetables, with a wide range of factors influencing the willingness to pay a premium for such products. In India, consumers demonstrate a strong preference for organic vegetables and fruits, motivated by concerns over chemical residues in conventional produce, environmental sustainability, and trust in retailers. Despite their willingness to pay a price premium, challenges such as premium prices and limited availability hinder the broader adoption of organic products (Nandi et al., 2017). A similar pattern is observed on Java Island, Indonesia, where consumers value organic green vegetables for their health benefits, reduced chemical emissions, and lower environmental impact. However, as Dewi et al., (2022) point out, many consumers expect organic vegetables to be priced lower than conventional options, posing significant challenges for producers and marketers to strike a balance between affordability and sustainability through efficient production practices.

In Nepal's Kathmandu Valley, Bhattarai, (2019) documented strong consumer interest in organic vegetables, with 94% of respondents expressing interest and 86% willing to pay a 25% premium. Influential factors include education levels, household size, and trust in organic certification systems. Despite the positive outlook, skepticism about the authenticity of organic products persists, signaling the need for robust certification systems backed by government support to enhance consumer trust and market growth. Similarly, in China, Li et al., (2019) and Hao et al., (2022) found in their study that the health consciousness , environmental concerns, and food safety are significant drivers of WTP for organic and ecological agricultural products. While higher income levels positively influence organic food consumption, a substantial knowledge gap about ecological products remains. Nearly 72% of Chinese consumers perceive organic products as overpriced, hindering broader acceptance. This highlights the need for targeted consumer education and strategies to bridge the knowledge gap.

Iran provides another perspective on consumer behavior. Ghazanfari et al., (2024), found that WTP for healthy-labeled foods is driven by health awareness, trust in brands, and environmental responsibility, while factors such as price sensitivity, household size, and food taste negatively influence purchasing decisions. Recommendations include enhancing trust through certification, improving product quality, and introducing subsidies to reduce costs. In the U.S., Dettmann & Dimitri, (2009) observed that demographic factors significantly influence the purchase of organic vegetables, with higher-income and well-educated households being more likely to buy organic. However, these households do not necessarily allocate a higher share of their budgets to organic purchases once they decide to buy, suggesting an exploratory rather than consistent purchasing behavior. The study makes an emphasis on the importance of incorporation of health and environmental motivations alongside demographic factors to better understand consumer choices.

In Beijing, Zhang et al., (2018) found that environmental health, food safety, and strict production standards were the top considerations for consumers purchasing organic vegetables. Positive influences on WTP include family income, safety awareness, and trust in organic labels, while price and freshness acted as barriers. Similarly, Yin et al., (2022) discovered high consumer purchase intentions for green-certified vegetables in

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Beijing, with determinants such as nutritional content, freshness, taste, and safety playing significant roles. These findings suggest that aligning product quality with consumer priorities is crucial for market growth. In Thailand, Sriwaranun et al., (2015) revealed that nearly all respondents (96.8%) showed their will to pay a premium for organic products, with the highest premiums for vegetables. Drivers of WTP included health consciousness, environmental concern, and prior experience with organic products. This demonstrates the importance of building consumer awareness and trust to enhance organic food adoption.

Studies from Trinidad, Vietnam, and Japan add further dimensions to the global understanding of WTP for organic products. Narine et al., (2015) found that in Trinidad, consumers are willing to pay 20% more for organic tomatoes, influenced by gender, education, income, and perceived health benefits. Ha et al., (2019) observed differences in urban and rural consumer behavior in Vietnam, with rural consumers demonstrating higher WTP due to risk perception and homegrown habits, while urban WTP was tied to education levels and trust in labels. Yang et al., (2021), in a study across Japan, Taiwan, and Indonesia, reported that food safety certification and freshness are consistently the top priorities for consumers, while other factors such as product origin and price varied in importance across these countries.

A systematic review by Katt & Meixner, (2020), provides a broader perspective on the drivers of WTP for organic food. Health consciousness, environmental attitudes, and trust in labeling and certifications emerged as critical factors influencing consumer behavior. While socio-demographic characteristics such as income and education were less effective for targeting consumers, the study highlighted the importance of promoting local produce, leveraging certifications, and adopting health and environmental messaging in marketing strategies.

Overall, the literature reveals that consumers are showing their will to pay a premium for organic foods when they perceive benefits such as health, safety, and environmental sustainability. However, challenges like high prices, limited availability, skepticism about authenticity, and knowledge gaps remain significant barriers. Addressing these challenges requires a multi-faceted approach, including lowering production costs, improving certification systems, enhancing consumer education, and promoting transparent marketing practices. These strategies can help expand the organic food market, ensuring it aligns with consumer preferences and sustainable development goals.

Health consciousness, environmental concerns, food safety, faith in certifications, and demographic traits like income are just a few of the contributing elements that have been thoroughly examined in the literature to date about consumer willingness to pay a premium for organic vegetables. But our knowledge of how these variables interact with income levels to influence consumer behaviour is conspicuously lacking. Studies frequently point to income as a key factor in determining willingness to pay a premium, but they seldom ever examine how it influences or mediates other factors like trust or health awareness. Additionally, less focus is placed on how income differences impact how affordable and beneficial organic vegetables are perceived, particularly across various socioeconomic groups.

The following hypotheses have been developed by the researchers based on the literature review;

- H1: There is a significant relationship between income level and willingness to pay a premium for organic vegetables.
- H2: There is a significant relationship between the health consciousness of consumers and their willingness to pay a premium for organic vegetables
- H3: There is a significant relationship between the nutritional content and willingness to pay a premium for organic vegetables
- H4: There is a significant relationship between the quality perceptions of organic vegetables and the willingness to pay a premium for organic vegetables.
- H5: There is a significant relationship between the environmental consciousness of consumers and their willingness to pay a premium for organic vegetables

IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The researchers employed a quantitative study approach using a structured questionnaire to gather data from the participants. The study was conducted in Delhi-NCR (National Capital Region), India. 320 samples were collected using the convenience sampling method. The data was collected through the structured questionnaire in an offline mode during March and April 2025. The researchers visited organic food stores, malls, hypermarkets, and supermarkets proximate to their places of stay to collect the data. The secondary data was also collected by exploring the available literature, including published research articles, books, magazines, and market research reports. Descriptive statistics, reliability analysis, correlation, and multiple regression were applied to analyse the data using IBM SPSS software.

V. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

➢ *Descriptive Analysis*

It is observed from the demographic profile shown in Table 1 that a diverse composition of consumers showed their willingness to pay a premium price for organic vegetables in Delhi NCR. The study included more males (59.7%) than females (40.3%), which indicates a higher male participation in the study. Age-wise, the respondents were fairly distributed, with a significant representation from the 31 to 45 years age group (37.5%), followed by those above 45 years (36.9%) and younger individuals aged 18 to 30 years (25.6%). The respondents' marital status shows that married individuals

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(63.1%) have significant participation in the study, which might suggest that family-related considerations drive consumer preference for organic vegetables. Furthermore, nuclear families constituted the majority (63.8%) compared to joint families (36.3%), which reflects a societal trend towards smaller family units that may influence consumption patterns.

The Table shows that the education level of respondents was notably high, with nearly half being postgraduates (47.5%) and 39.1% graduates, which highlights that awareness about organic vegetables may be linked to the level of education. The occupation data of the respondents showed a significant proportion of professionals (37.5%) and self-employed individuals (36.6%), indicating a preference for organic vegetables among those with stable incomes and health-conscious lifestyles. Students, freelancers, and gig workers also participated (25.9%), showcasing interest among the younger and more flexible workforce. Income distribution further complements this profile, with a large segment earning ₹5 to ₹10 lakhs annually (44.1%), followed by those earning above ₹10 lakhs (32.8%), and a smaller group with incomes up to ₹5 lakhs (23.1%). This variation suggests that while organic vegetables attract premium buyers, they also interest lower-income groups, potentially due to growing health awareness. Overall, the respondents represent a mix of socio-economic and demographic attributes that shape their attitudes toward paying for organic vegetables.

Table 1: Demographic Features of the Respondents (N=320)

Variables	Options	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	191	59.7
	Female	129	40.3
Age	18 to 30 Years	82	25.6
	31 to 45 Years	120	37.5
	Above 45 Years	118	36.9
Marital Status	Single	118	36.9
	Married	202	63.1
Family Type	Nuclear	204	63.8
	Joint	116	36.3
Education	High School	43	13.4
	Graduate	125	39.1
	Post Graduate	152	47.5
Occupation	Student/Freelancer/Gig-worker	83	25.9
	Self-employed	117	36.6
	Professional (Doctor/Engineer/Lawyer/CA etc.)	120	37.5
Income (Annual)	Up to 5 Lakhs	74	23.1
	5 to 10 Lakhs	141	44.1
	Above 10 Lakhs	105	32.8

Source: Primary Data

- *Correlation Analysis*

Table 2: Correlation and Determinants:

		Income	Health Consciousness	Nutritional Content	Quality	Environmental Consciousness	Willingness to Pay a Premium
Income	Pearson Correlation	1					
	Sig. (2-tailed)						
	N	320					
Health Consciousness	Pearson Correlation	-.050	1				
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.376					
	N	320	320				
Nutritional Content	Pearson Correlation	.030	.622**	1			
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.596	.000				
	N	320	320	320			

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Quality	Pearson Correlation	.031	.536**	.585**	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.582	.000	.000			
	N	320	320	320	320		
Environmental Consciousness	Pearson Correlation	.019	.631**	.437**	.508**	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.735	.000	.000	.000		
	N	320	320	320	320	320	
Willingness to Pay a Premium	Pearson Correlation	.011	.395**	.421**	.312**	.352**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.846	.000	.000	.000	.000	
	N	320	320	320	320	320	320

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
Source: Primary Data

It is evident from the correlation analysis, which is shown in Table 2, that Income has a very weak and statistically insignificant relationship with the willingness of consumers to pay a premium for organic vegetables (r=0.011,p=0.846). This suggests that consumers' income levels do not directly influence their willingness to pay a premium for organic vegetables. However, Health consciousness shows a moderate positive correlation with willingness to pay a premium (r=0.395 and p<0.01), which indicates that consumers who are concerned about their health are somewhat more willing to pay a premium for organic vegetables. Similarly**,** Nutritional content has a stronger positive relationship with willingness to pay a premium (r=0.421 and p<0.01), highlighting that the nutritional content inherited in organic vegetables significantly influences the willingness to pay a premium for it. The variables Quality (r=0.312 and p<0.01) and environmental consciousness (r=0.352 and p<0.01) also show moderate positive correlations with Willingness to pay a premium, reflecting the importance of product quality and environmental consciousness of the consumers in shaping how consumers view organic vegetables.

- *Multiple Regression Analysis*

Table 3: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.469	.220	.208	.65463

Predictors: (Constant), Environmental Consciousness, Income, Nutrition content, Quality, Health Consciousness
Source: Primary Data

Table 4: ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	37.962	5	7.592	17.717	.000
	Residual	134.561	314	.429		
	Total	172.523	319			

Dependent Variable: Willingness to Pay a Premium
Predictors: (Constant), Environmental consciousness, Income, Nutritional content, Quality, Health Consciousness
Source: Primary Data

Table 5: Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.207	.276		4.370	.000
	Income	.006	.050	.006	.121	.904
	Health Consciousness	.140	.082	.128	1.706	.089
	Nutritional Content	.263	.067	.272	3.940	.000
	Quality	.011	.074	.009	.143	.886
	Environment Consciousness	.164	.074	.148	2.220	.027

Dependent Variable: Willingness to Pay a Premium
Source: Primary Data

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Multiple regression analysis was conducted using the enter method to check the combined influence of the factors influencing the willingness to pay a premium for organic vegetables. Tables 3, 4 & 5 show the results of multiple regression analysis, which elaborates the findings by quantifying the collective influence of the influencing factors on willingness to pay a premium. The model summary shown in Table 3 explains 22% of the variance in willingness to pay a premium ($R^2 = 0.220$, Adjusted $R^2 = 0.208$. The analysis shows that the overall model is statistically significant ($F=17.717$ and $p<0.00$) as shown in Table 4. Table 5 shows that among the predictor variables, Nutritional content stands out as the strongest factor influencing the Willingness to pay a premium of the consumers ($\beta=0.272$ and $p<0.001$), indicating that consumers give high value to the nutritional benefits of organic vegetables in their willingness to pay a premium. This may mean that consumers are more willing to pay for vegetables that offer greater nutritional content. Environmental consciousness follows as the second most influential factor ($\beta=0.148$ and $p=0.027$) influencing the willingness to pay a premium for organic vegetables. It reflects the importance of consumers' environmental consciousness when paying for organic vegetables. These results demonstrate that nutritional content and environmental consciousness are critical components that consumers use to justify their willingness to pay a premium for organic vegetables.

However, other variables, such as Income ($p=0.904$), Health consciousness ($p=0.089$), and Quality ($p=0.886$), are not significant predictors in the regression model as shown in Table 5. While Health consciousness has moderate correlations with other variables and shows some influence, its impact on willingness to pay a premium is relatively weak compared to Nutritional content and Environmental consciousness. Quality, although correlated with Nutritional content and Environmental consciousness, surprisingly does not significantly affect willingness to pay a premium for organic vegetables, which suggests that its influence may be moderated by other factors not captured in this model.

- *Testing of Hypothesis*

The Hypothesis testing of the results is shown in Table 6. It may be observed from the table that the factors 'Nutritional content and Environmental Consciousness' are the most influencing factors in the Willingness to Pay a premium for organic vegetables so the hypotheses are accepted whereas the factors 'Income, Health Consciousness, and Quality' do not have a significant impact on Willingness to Pay a Premium for Organic vegetables, thus the hypotheses are rejected.

Table 6: Testing of Hypothesis

Independent Variable	Hypothesis (H1)	Beta	P-Value	Action	Conclusion
Income	There is a significant relationship between income level and willingness to pay a premium for organic vegetables.	0.006	0.904	Rejected	No Significant positive relationship with the willingness to pay a premium
Health Consciousness	There is a significant relationship between the health consciousness of consumers and their willingness to pay a premium for organic vegetables	.128	0.089	Rejected	No Significant positive relationship with the willingness to pay a premium
Nutritional Content	There is a significant relationship between the nutritional content and willingness to pay a premium for organic vegetables	0.272	0.000	Accepted	Significant positive relationship with willingness to pay a premium
Quality	There is a significant relationship between the quality perceptions of organic vegetables and the willingness to pay a premium for organic vegetables.	0.009	0.886	Rejected	No Significant positive relationship with the willingness to pay a premium
Environment Consciousness	There is a significant relationship between the environmental consciousness of consumers and their willingness to pay a premium for organic vegetables	0.148	0.027	Accepted	Significant positive relationship with willingness to pay a premium

Source: The Researcher

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VI. DISCUSSION

The results of the study reveal that the nutritional benefits of organic vegetables and consumers' environmental consciousness are key influencing factors of willingness to pay a premium. This is consistent with earlier studies showing customers believe organic food products are better and more ecologically friendly, which increases their apparent value and readiness to pay more (Hughner et al., 2007; Yiridoe et al., 2005). In this regard, elements like income, health consciousness, and quality of organic veggies have no bearing on pricing perceptions. Given past research by Chen (2007) and Magnusson et al. (2001), which underlined the health issues as the main driving force for organic food consumption, this is somewhat surprising.

Trust and consumer knowledge have a mediating role that could help to explain the little influence of health and quality perceptions. Research of Studies of Janssen & Hamm (2012) and Padel & Foster (2005) shows that anticipated health benefits and quality improvements might not convert into willingness to pay a premium without substantial consumer faith in organic certification and labels. Likewise, customer assessments of product value have been demonstrated to be shaped by knowledge of organic criteria and their consequences (Aertsens et al., 2009). Future research could thus profit from integrating mediating factors as trust, brand credibility, and consumer knowledge to investigate their impact on the perceived value of health and quality traits.

These results offer organic food industry legislators and marketers a practical information. Since organic veggies are the main drivers of good pricing perceptions, emphasis should be on stressing their environmental sustainability and nutritional advantages. Studies like (Michaelidou & Hassan, 2008), who contend that nutritional and environmental message improves consumer involvement and brand loyalty, confirm this. Therefore, campaigns and communication strategies should be made to inform consumers on the better nutritional value and environmentally friendly manufacturing techniques of organic veggies. Particularly for people who care about the environment, doing this could assist explain their higher pricing and create more strong purchase intentions.

Further investigation of the function of moderating or mediating elements such as trust, lifestyle choices, or brand perception will help to better grasp the less-than-expected impact of health and quality. Studies such as (Tarkiainen & Sundqvist, 2005) imply that views of dietary healthiness are much influenced by personal beliefs and way of life. By means of focused educational interventions, open labelling, and third-party certification, strengthening the perceived value of health and quality will help to improve their impact on consumer price perceptions, so increasing the attractiveness and competitiveness of organic products in the larger food market.

VII. CONCLUSION

This study shows that people are willing to pay more for organic vegetables mainly because they believe these products are more nutritious and good for the environment. These two factors clearly stand out as the strongest influences on premium pricing. On the other hand, factors like health consciousness and perceived quality didn't have as much of an effect as expected. This might be because trust and awareness play a key role. If consumers don't fully understand or believe in organic labels and certifications, their health and quality concerns may not translate into paying more.

The findings suggest that marketers and policymakers should focus on communicating the real nutritional and environmental benefits of organic vegetables. Building trust through transparent labeling, credible certification, and better consumer education could make a big difference. When people clearly see the value behind what they're buying, they're more likely to accept higher prices and develop stronger purchase intentions. Future research could look deeper into how factors like lifestyle, brand reputation, and consumer trust shape buying behavior. Understanding these connections can help make organic products more appealing and competitive in the broader food market.

- *Conflict of Interest*

There is no conflict of interest reported among the authors.

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- *Authors; Declaration Contribution*

Azhar Mustafa Ansari - Designed the study, performed the analysis, and drafted the manuscript
Mohd. Razaullah Khan - Contributed to data collection, literature review, and editing
M. A. Sikandar - conceptualized the manuscript

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