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Organic products consumer characteristics and preferences in Uganda

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Abstract

This study investigates the demographic and socio-economic characteristics of organic food consumers, as well as their perceptions, preferences, and purchasing behaviour in Kampala. Against the backdrop of rising global concerns over food safety, health outcomes, and environmental sustainability, the study provides empirical evidence from a developing country context where organic markets remain underexplored. A cross-sectional research design was employed, integrating quantitative and qualitative approaches. Primary data were collected from 150 consumers using structured questionnaires, complemented by descriptive statistics, cross-tabulations, and regression analysis to identify key determinants of organic food consumption.

The findings reveal that organic consumers are predominantly female, married, and highly educated, with consumption largely concentrated among individuals aged 36–69 years. Awareness of health benefits is widespread, with over 90 % of respondents associating organic products with improved health, absence of synthetic chemicals, and natural production systems. However, only a minority recognise formal organic certification, indicating a significant trust and information gap within the market. Consumer preferences are strongly skewed toward fresh produce, particularly fruits and vegetables, although demand for animal products and traditional staples is also notable.

Econometric results indicate that awareness of health benefits and education level are significant positive determinants of organic food purchasing, while access to market information exhibits an unexpected negative effect, suggesting deeper structural constraints such as limited availability and certification credibility. Age and price perceptions also influence purchasing decisions, though to a lesser extent.

The study concludes that organic food consumption in Uganda is driven primarily by health consciousness and socio-economic status, but constrained by institutional weaknesses and market inefficiencies. Policy interventions should prioritise consumer education, strengthen certification and regulatory systems, and improve market access to enhance trust and expand the organic sector.

Keywords: Characteristics, consumers, organic products, preferences

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