

Organic and functional food consumption: a sociodemographic perspective

Konzumacija organske i funkcionalne hrane: sociodemografska perspektiva

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Abstract

Health gains importance when it comes to important social and personal values. In addition to physical activity, people are becoming aware that the food they consume has a great impact on their health and are increasingly paying attention to the benefits of leading and maintaining a healthier lifestyle. This study examines the consumption of organic and functional foods, highlighting the growing interest in these products due to their perceived health benefits. Organic foods are produced through environmentally sustainable practices, free from synthetic chemicals, while functional foods are enriched with bioactive ingredients that promote health beyond basic nutritional needs. The study focused on the consumption of organic and functional food among Serbian residents concerning sociodemographic characteristics. The results show that organic food is consumed more frequently than functional food. Differences in consumption were tested based on sociodemographic characteristics, revealing that gender and age do not significantly influence consumption patterns. However, education level and income were identified as significant factors influencing the consumption of organic food, whereas they did not play a substantial role in the consumption of functional food. These findings suggest that higher education and income levels contribute to a greater preference for organic products, while functional food consumption remains consistent across different demographic groups.

Keywords: organic food, functional food, consumption, demographics

Sažetak

Zdravlje postaje sve važnije kada su u pitanju važne društvene i lične vrednosti. Pored fizičke aktivnosti, ljudi postaju svesniji da hrana koju konzumiraju ima veliki uticaj na njihovo zdravlje i sve više obraćaju pažnju na prednosti vođenja i održavanja zdravijeg načina života. Ova studija istražuje konzumaciju organske i funkcionalne hrane, ističući rastuće interesovanje za ove proizvode zbog njihovih percipiranih zdravstvenih koristi. Organska hrana se proizvodi kroz ekološki održive prakse, bez sintetičkih hemikalija, dok je funkcionalna hrana obogaćena bioaktivnim sastojcima koji pružaju zdravstvene koristi iznad osnovnih nutritivnih potreba. Istraživanje se fokusiralo na konzumaciju organske i funkcionalne hrane među stanovnicima Srbije u odnosu na njihove sociodemografske karakteristike. Rezultati pokazuju da se organska hrana konzumira učestalije nego funkcionalna hrana. Razlike u konzumaciji testirane su na osnovu sociodemografskih karakteristika, i utvrđeno je da pol i starost ne utiču značajno na konzumaciju. Međutim, nivo obrazovanja i prihodi identifikovani su kao značajni faktori koji utiču na konzumaciju organske hrane, dok nisu imali značajan uticaj na konzumaciju funkcionalne hrane. Ovi nalazi sugerišu da viši nivo obrazovanja i prihoda doprinosi većoj sklonosti ka organskim proizvodima, dok konzumacija funkcionalne hrane ostaje dosledna među različitim demografskim grupama.

Ključne reči: organska hrana, funkcionalna hrana, konzumacija, demografske karakteristike

1. Introduction

Recent trends in food consumption show a significant change in the understanding of food. Traditional role of food is providing essential nutrients and satisfying hunger,

but in modern era food is increasingly seen as an important factor in maintaining health, promoting psycho-physical well-being, and preventing certain diseases. Considering the enormous expences associated with medical treatments, the prevention of health problems is

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becoming a priority. Healthy lifestyle choices have the potential to reduce a great number of health issues that are linked to lifestyle factors. As part of their efforts to maintain a healthy lifestyle, consumers are paying more attention to the health-promoting qualities of food as they become more conscious of the possible effects their dietary choices may have on their health (Bachl, 2007; Chrysochou, 2010; Pech-Lopatta, 2007).

There is a significant relationship between consumption of organic and functional food and various health benefits. Functional foods (fruits, vegetables, cereals, meat, fish, and dairy) include bioactive compounds that have a significant function in maintaining health and reducing disease risk factors (Essa et al., 2021). According to Goetzke et al. (2014), people who consume organic and functional foods tend to have better overall health and well-being.

Organic food is a type of food that is considered healthier and meeting the "better for me" standard (Pech-Lopatta, 2007). According to numerous studies (e.g., Hughner et al., 2007; Lea & Worsley, 2005; Torjusen et al., 2001), environmental concerns and animal welfare are among the primary factors of organic food consumption. Furthermore, consuming more organic food, including dairy and fresh products such as vegetables, fruits, bread, and eggs, is important for health maintenance (Nagy-Pércsi & Fogarassy, 2019; Wu et al., 2019). Health and food safety are also among the most significant factors influencing consumer attitudes toward organic food, according to numerous studies (e.g., Çelik & Gül, 2023; Hemmerling et al., 2015; Pino et al., 2012).

Functional food is described as food that has a positive influence on body functions and reducing the risk of diseases (Diplock et al., 1999). Considering that functional food promises consumers specific health benefits, it is reasonable to assume that health is the primary factor for purchasing these products. Several studies have focused on explaining the association between health orientation and the consumption of functional food, but results have been inconsistent (Kaur & Singh, 2017).

The purpose of this study is to determine the degree of consumption of organic and functional foods among Serbian population. Study investigates whether there are evident consumption patterns based on respondents' sociodemographic characteristics. Understanding these relationships will provide insights into Serbian consumer behavior and potential market trends.

2. Consumption of organic and functional foods according to demographic profiles

The adoption of functional food is significantly influenced by consumer characteristics, such as demographic background and personal motivation for engaging in health-related activities. According to many studies (e.g., Dagevos, 2005; de Jong et al., 2003; Brečić et al., 2014; Büyükkaragöz et al., 2014), sociodemographic characteristics of consumers, such as gender, education

level, and age, are the most significant factors that contribute to the acceptance of functional food. In addition to that, it is crucial to regularly assess consumer behavior and environmental awareness because they are dynamic and always changing (Wojciechowska-Solis & Barska 2021).

Consumers are frequently exposed to various examples demonstrating women's preference for healthier eating habits. According to Sobal (2005), consumers indeed associate healthy food with femininity, while unhealthy food is linked to masculinity. Women are more likely than men to exhibit more pro-environmental attitudes and behaviors (Zelezny et al., 2000), and they are more likely to buy pesticide-free products (Hunter et al., 2004). Regular exposure to such instances creates a cognitive association between femininity and organic selection and other pro-environmental choices. People do associate pro-environmental behavior with femininity, regardless of their own gender (Brough et al., 2016). Several studies have found that women generally exhibit a more favorable attitude toward purchasing and consuming organic and functional foods compared to men. For example, studies conducted by Gundala et al. (2022) and Rosyid et al. (2023) found that women are more likely to consume organic food than men. Also, the findings of Ureña et al. (2008) indicate that although men are more likely to pay a premium for organic food than women, women have a more positive attitude toward buying and consuming organic food.

Recent food industry trends have showed that functional food is gaining increasing popularity worldwide and is becoming an essential part of daily diets (Kaur & Singh, 2017). Küster-Boluda & Vidal-Capilla, (2017) found gender-related differences in dietary preferences (e.g., Küster-Boluda & Vidal-Capilla, 2017). This could be due to the increased focus of women on body weight management and their stronger interest in healthy eating habits (Küster-Boluda & Vidal-Capilla, 2017). Numerous studies (e.g., Brečić et al., 2014; Verneau et al., 2019; Büyükkaragöz et al., 2014; Çakiroğlu & Uçar, 2018) have demonstrated that women are more inclined to consume functional food compared to men. On the other hand, Szczepanska et al. (2024) did not reveal statistically significant differences in the frequency of consumption of functional products according to gender. Based on that, H_1 is set:

H_1 : There are differences in consumption of organic and functional food according to gender of respondents.

Many studies identified age as significant factor that influences consumers' attitudes and behaviors toward organic and functional food (e.g., Siegrist et al., 2015; Bruschi et al., 2015; Annunziata et al., 2015; Kranjac et al., 2017; Kljusurić et al., 2015; Aertsens et al., 2009). The relationship between age and organic food consumption varies across studies. Magnusson et al. (2001) and Dettmann and Dimitri (2009) found that younger consumers show greater interest in organic foods, while older adults do not purchase them consistently. In the similar vein, Kranjac et al. (2017) reported that young

people buy organic foods more frequently than older people. On the other hand, some studies identified older people as organic food consumers (Mintel, 2000; Xie et al., 2015).

Previous research, like the one conducted by Poulsen (1999) found that women and older respondents have more favorable attitudes toward functional food when compared to other consumer groups. Many studies identified that older people are the most frequent consumers of functional food (e.g., Verneau et al., 2019; Büyükkaragöz et al., 2014). According to Prodanović & Lazović (2015) older consumers are more likely to accept functional foods, even if these products may have a less appealing taste compared to regular foods. On the other hand, young people are less interested in functional foods, often prioritizing taste and convenience (Urala & Lähtenmäki, 2007).

H₂: There are differences in consumption of organic and functional food according to age of respondents.

In the United States and Europe, the main consumers of functional foods are those with greater incomes and levels of education (Siro et al. 2008). According to Stolz et al. (2011), people with higher incomes prefer purchasing organic food. In similar vein, Gracia and Magistris (2008) discovered that in southern Italy, consumers' income has a significant impact on their choice of organic food, with lower-income consumers being less likely to choose organic products. Dettmann and Dimitri (2007) discovered that people with higher levels of education are more likely to buy organic foods than those with lower level of education. Similarly, Korkmaz et al. (2014) evaluated how education affects preferences for buying organic fresh vegetables and fruits and concluded that higher level of education is associated with an increased tendency to select organic options. On the other hand, Martins et al. (2020) found no significant relationship between purchase of organic food and education level.

Education also has an impact on the consumption of functional food or food that provides additional health benefits beyond basic nutrition. Increased knowledge and awareness, which are frequently associated with higher levels of education, have been identified as elements that would encourage the consumption of functional foods, according to a study that examined perceptions and awareness of functional foods (Vella et al., 2014). According to Baker et al. (2022), consumers' knowledge of functional foods is influenced by demographic factors, such as level of education, and this in turn influences their consumption habits. Based on that, the following hypothesis is set:

H₃: There are differences in consumption of organic and functional food according to level of education of respondents.

Income is one of the demographic factors that is known to have a significant impact on consumers' decisions to buy organic food. For example, Loureiro et al. (2001) found that people who earn more are more likely to buy organic

food. Likewise, Voon et al. (2011) found that income and the purchase of organic products were positively correlated. Higher income quality has a positive impact on environmental values, perceived consumer effectiveness, and the intention to buy organic food (Zheng et al., 2023). The consumption of different organic foods, including vegetables, legumes, nuts, cereal products, meat, fish, eggs, bread, potatoes, dairy products, and butter, is also strongly correlated with household income (Lafram et al., 2024). As stated by Gundala & Singh (2021), purchasing organic food is directly correlated with income. However, a study by Korkmaz et al. (2014) found that income level has no effect on the preference for organic products.

According to Vorage et al. (2020) there is a greater willingness and ability of higher socioeconomic groups to pay premium prices for functional food. Similarly, Baker et al. (2022) discovered that higher income levels are frequently correlated with higher intentions to buy functional food. Safrad et al. (2024) found that positive perceptions of functional foods are directly correlated with income, particularly among middle-aged adults whose monthly family income was more than four times the minimum wage. Based on that, the following hypothesis is set:

H₄: There are differences in consumption of organic and functional food according to income level of respondents.

3. Methodology

For the research on the consumption of organic and functional food, two scales were used, which were adopted from the model of Goetzke et al. (2014). The study was conducted on the territory of the Republic of Serbia, both face-to-face and online, from August to November 2024. The face-to-face survey was conducted using a randomly selected sample, ensuring a diverse group of respondents. On the other hand, the online survey was shared in various social media groups related to food, health, and lifestyle, allowing for a broader reach. The questionnaire consisted of two parts. The first part included four questions related to the sociodemographic characteristics of the respondents: gender, age, level of education, and income. The second part of the questionnaire consisted of 20 items related to the frequency of consumption of organic and functional food (8 items related to consumption of organic food and 12 related to consumption of functional food). To answer the question of how often they consumed these products in the past six months, a five-point Likert scale was used (1 – never, 2 – rarely, 3 – sometimes, 4 – often, 5 – always). The purpose of the conducted study was to answer the question of whether gender has an impact on the consumption of organic and functional food.

4. Results

Sample description

The demographic composition of the sample is presented in Table 1, detailing gender, age, education level, and income distribution. The sample comprises a relatively

balanced gender distribution, with 53.2% of respondents identifying as female and 46.8% as male. Regarding age distribution, most respondents (57.7%) fall within the 21–40 age category, indicating a predominance of young to middle-aged individuals in the sample. The 41–60 age group constitutes 29.4%, while older individuals (61+ years) account for 8.7%. The lowest representation is found in the youngest category (≤ 20 years), comprising only 4.2% of the respondents. In terms of education, the largest proportion of respondents (50.2%) holds a graduate degree, followed by those with a master's degree (27.2%) and high school education (19.6%). The smallest category consists of PhD holders (3.0%). This indicates a relatively highly educated sample, which may influence perceptions and consumption patterns related to the study's focus, as previous research suggests that higher education levels are associated with greater awareness and acceptance of scientific and health-related information (Lusk & Briggeman, 2009).

Table 1. Sociodemographic characteristics of respondents

	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	124	46.8
Female	141	53.2
Age		
Up to 20 years	11	4.2
21 – 40 years	153	57.7
41 – 60 years	78	29.4
Over 61 years	23	8.7
Education level		
High school	52	19.6
Graduate degree	133	50.2
Master's degree	72	27.2
PhD	8	3.0
Income		
Do 50.000 RSD	80	30.2
50.001 – 75.000 RSD	90	34.0
75.001 – 100.000 RSD	74	27.9
Over 100.000 RSD	21	7.9

Source: Prepared by the authors based on analysis in SPSS

Descriptive statistical analysis

The results of the descriptive statistical analysis indicate that respondents generally prefer organic products such as vegetables and salads ($M=3.22$), which may suggest greater awareness of healthier dietary practices. This preference could be linked to the perception of organically grown products as more natural and less industrially processed, as well as their greater availability in the market. Vegetables and salads are staple food items often widely available in stores, while the marketing of organically grown products frequently emphasizes their naturalness, health benefits, and environmental advantages, further contributing to their popularity. On the other hand, the lower average value for "Organic cereals" ($M=2.30$) may indicate that these products are not as commonly included in respondents' daily diets, are

perceived as more expensive and less of a priority, or that marketing efforts for these products are insufficient.

Regarding functional food, the highest value for the item "Dairy products with probiotics" ($M=3.40$) suggests that respondents are relatively aware of the importance of reducing sugar intake in their daily diets. This could reflect global trends and nutritional recommendations about the negative health impacts of excessive sugar consumption. Conversely, the lowest value for "Cholesterol-lowering oil" ($M=1.78$) may signal the lower market presence of these products, their cost, or a lack of information about their health benefits among consumers.

Using Cronbach's alpha coefficient of reliability for the scales, it was determined that both identified factors fall within the domain of high reliability (Organic food consumption $\alpha = .913$, Functional food consumption $\alpha = .809$). The reliability values of both scales exceed the recommended threshold of 0.7 (Kaiser, 1974).

Table 2. Results of descriptive statistical analysis

Items	M	SD
Organic vegetables/salad	3.22	1.096
Organic fruits	3.15	1.085
Generally, organically grown products	3.08	1.038
Organic milk and milk products	2.64	1.287
Organic bread and bakery products	2.62	1.280
Organic meat and sausages	2.80	1.289
Organic cereals (e.g., musli)	2.30	1.200
Organic eggs	3.25	1.337
Generally functional food	2.99	1.035
Dairy products with probiotics	3.40	1.144
ACE drinks (drinks with vitamins A, C, E)	2.72	1.227
Wellness water	1.87	1.042
Wellness flakes/musli	2.24	1.25
Chewing gum for oral protection	2.44	1.42
Bread with vitamins/supplements	2.09	1.20
Energy drinks	1.93	1.14
Low fat content products	2.83	1.09
Low sugar content products	3.09	1.044
Salt enriched with fluoride and folic acid	2.14	1.044
Cholesterol-lowering oil	1.78	1.061

Source: Prepared by the authors based on analysis in SPSS

T-test according to gender

To determine whether there are statistically significant differences in the consumption of organic and functional food based on the gender of the respondents, an independent samples t-test was conducted (Table 3). The test revealed no statistically significant differences in the consumption of organic food ($p = .715$) or functional food ($p = .419$) with respect to gender. The lack of statistically significant differences in the consumption of organic and functional food based on gender suggests that factors other than gender may be influencing dietary choices. This could reflect an increasing awareness of health benefits among both men and women, leading to similar consumption patterns. The results of this analysis did not confirm Hypothesis 1.

Table 3. – t-test according to gender

Type of food	Gender		t-value	p
	Male (N=98)	Female (N=119)		
Organic food consumption	2.84	2.79	.366	.715
Functional food consumption	2.34	2.42	-.809	.419

Source: Prepared by the authors based on analysis in SPSS

Analysis of variance ANOVA

To test whether there are differences in the consumption of organic and functional foods among different respondent groups, ANOVA (Analysis of Variance) was used. Sociodemographic characteristics of the respondents (age, education, and income) were used as independent variables.

Using ANOVA, it was tested whether there are differences in the consumption of organic and functional foods based on the age of the respondents (Table 4). The results of the analysis showed that there were no statistically significant differences based on age, so the LSD post-hoc test was not applied. A potential explanation for the results, which show no statistically significant differences in the consumption of organic and functional foods in Serbia based on age, could be that

awareness about health and nutrition is widespread across all age groups. It is possible that information about the benefits of organic and functional foods has become accessible throughout society, and people of all ages are gradually adopting healthier eating habits. Additionally, factors such as socio-economic status, education, or even product marketing strategies may play a more significant role in decision-making regarding the consumption of these types of foods than the age of the respondents. In some cases, older generations may be influenced by traditions and habits that have been present for longer, while younger generations may be more exposed to new trends through social media and the media. However, if these factors are similar across all age groups, this could explain why age did not have a statistically significant impact on the consumption of organic and functional foods in this study. Obtained results did not provide support for H₂.

Table 4. ANOVA according to age

Type of food	Age				F	p	LSD post-hoc test
	Up to 20 years (N=9)	21-40 years (N=173)	41 – 60 years (N=31)	Over 61 years (N=4)			
Organic food consumption	3.3977	2.8056	2.8942	3.1087	1.909	.128	-
Functional food consumption	2.4463	2.4668	2.5932	2.5296	.735	.532	-

Source: Prepared by the authors based on analysis in SPSS

Using ANOVA, it was tested whether there are differences in the consumption of organic and functional foods based on the education level of the respondents (Table 5). The results of the analysis revealed statistically significant differences between certain groups in the consumption of organic food ($F = 3.070$, $p = 0.028$), and the LSD post-hoc test was applied to identify the specific groups showing these differences. The test showed that respondents with a high school diploma consume organic food more than those with a university degree or a master's degree. A possible explanation for why individuals with only a high school education consume organic food more than those with higher education levels could lie in the fact

that lower levels of education do not necessarily equate to a lack of health awareness. These individuals may be more inclined to seek natural and simple options that organic food offers. Additionally, lower socio-economic status, which is often associated with a high school education, may drive a greater focus on health and nutrition as a means of maintaining well-being and preventing illness. In contrast, individuals with higher education levels might have more access to alternative and specialized information, making them more likely to experiment with different diets or prioritize factors such as price, taste, or convenience over organic options. Thus, H₃ is partially supported.

Table 5. ANOVA according to education lever

Type of food	Education level				F	p	LSD post-hoc test
	High school (N=52)	Graduate degree (N=133)	Master's degree (N=72)	PhD (N=8)			
Organic food consumption	3.2019	2.8449	2.6892	2.7656	3.070	.028	1>2,3
Functional food consumption	2.5401	2.4459	2.3819	2.4377	1.155	.327	-

Source: Prepared by the authors based on analysis in SPSS

ANOVA was used for determining whether there are differences in the consumption of organic and functional food based on the income level of the respondents (Table 6). The LSD post-hoc test showed that there are statistically significant differences in the consumption of organic food among different income groups. Specifically, participants with the lowest income levels reported a higher level of organic food consumption

compared to those with higher incomes. This finding may seem surprising, as it is often assumed that individuals with higher incomes have greater access to and willingness to purchase organic food due to its higher prices. However, this outcome could be explained by a variety of factors. First, people with lower income levels may place a higher value on nutrition and health, which may motivate them to spend more on organic food despite

their smaller budget. Also, they might think that organic food is healthier and better quality, which makes it a better choice even if it costs more. Geographical factors and the availability of organic food might also change depending on location. In some areas, organic products may be easier for people with lower incomes to afford because they are

easier to get or because they are subsidized. This result shows how complicated the factors that affect consumer behavior are, suggesting that socio-economic factors affect food choices in ways that need more research. Obtained results partially confirmed H_4 .

Table 6. ANOVA according to income lever

Type of food	Income level				F	p	LSD post-hoc test
	Up to 50.000 RSD (N=52)	50.001 – 75.000 RSD (N=133)	75.001 – 100.000 RSD (N=72)	Over 100.000 RSD (N=8)			
Organic food consumption	3.2019	2.8449	2.6892	2.7656	3.070	.028	1>2.3
Functional food consumption	2.5401	2.4459	2.3819	2.4377	1.155	.327	-

Source: Prepared by the authors based on analysis in SPSS

5. Discussion and conclusion

This research aimed to examine the extent to which Serbian population consumes organic and functional foods, with the goal of gaining insight into consumer habits and attitudes toward these types of food. Organic food, which is distinguished by its production methods that avoid pesticides and synthetic fertilizers, is gaining popularity among consumers seeking a healthier lifestyle. Conversely, functional foods are also becoming more popular in the market since they provide extra health advantages like boosting immunity or controlling digestion. The consumption of organic and functional foods has the potential to increase in Serbia; however, to fully achieve this potential, efforts must concentrate on increasing consumer awareness, resolving affordability difficulties connected to income, and enhancing product availability. Despite the growing interest in these kinds of products, consumer choices are influenced by several factors, including costs, accessibility, as well as understanding of their advantages. To better understand the consumption patterns, sociodemographic traits were examined to determine which particular groups are more prone to eat these foods.

The results of this study showed that gender is not significant factor in the consumption of organic and functional food (*Organic* $t=.366$, $p=.715$; *Functional* $t=-.809$, $p=.419$). Regarding organic food consumption, these findings are in accordance with the study by Gundala and Singh (2021), which suggested that gender does not influence the purchase of organic food. Likewise, in the context of functional food consumption, Vella et al. (2014) found no significant effect of gender, which is consistent with the results obtained in this study. Therefore, the findings do not support H_1 .

Previous studies highlighted the influence of age on attitudes towards consumption of organic and functional food (e.g., Kljusurić et al., 2015; Bruschi et al., 2015; Kranjac et al., 2017). Our study did not find a significant influence of age on organic food consumption, which aligns with the findings of Aertsens et al. (2009). Their study found that age does not significantly influence consumers' decisions to buy organic food. These findings imply that consumers' decisions to eat organic food may be strongly influenced by other variables. The results of this study do not indicate a significant association between

age and consumption of functional foods, even though numerous studies found that older persons show stronger acceptance of functional foods (e.g., Prodanović & Lazović, 2015; Poulsen, 1999). Given that younger people are increasingly aware of the advantages of functional foods, it's probable that attitudes toward nutrition and health are becoming more similar across generations. According to Urala and Lähteenmäki (2004), younger consumers are becoming more health-conscious, including the use of functional foods, as they gain access to greater understanding about their benefits. Obtained results did not support H_2 .

Education level was found to have a significant effect on the consumption of organic food, but not on the consumption of functional foods. This is consistent with previous research showing that people who have a higher education are more willing to buy organic food (Dettmann & Dimitri, 2007; Korkmaz et al., 2014), while some studies do not support this finding (Martins et al., 2020). Although education has been associated with increased knowledge and awareness of functional foods (Vella et al., 2014; Baker et al., 2022), our findings failed to support the idea that education has a direct effect on the consumption of functional foods. Therefore, H_3 was partially confirmed.

Loureiro et al. (2001), Voon et al. (2011), and Zheng et al. (2023) have shown that income has a substantial impact on the consumption of organic food, with higher income levels being positively associated with increased purchases.

Lafram et al. (2024) and Gundala & Singh (2021) have reported that people with a higher income are more likely to buy organic items. This study's findings are consistent with those of other studies, indicating a similar strong impact of income on organic food consumption. However, unlike Vorage et al. (2020), Baker et al. (2022), and Saffraid et al. (2024), income appears to have no substantial effect on the consumption of functional foods. Hence, H_4 is partially confirmed.

The results of this study show that organic food is consumed slightly more than functional food. This shows that consumers are more likely to prefer organic products, which should be investigated further in future studies. Some studies (e.g., Grochowska-Niedworok et al., 2017;

Topolska et al., 2021) have found that associating an unpleasant taste with functional foods is a significant factor contributing to their avoidance by consumers. This could potentially explain the lower consumption of functional food in Serbia, as consumers may be less inclined to purchase these products due to negative perceptions about their taste. Additionally, a lack of awareness about what functional foods are may further hinder their consumption, as individuals may not fully understand the health benefits they offer or the differences between functional and regular food. Providing additional information about the benefits of organic food products may help convince consumers to make the purchase. This study will be helpful to retailers to segment their consumers based on their demographics. The study will also help retailers understand the factors that are likely to influence consumers' organic food purchases and design strategies to increase their sales. Since availability is one factor in buying decisions, retailers should reach out to local shops/areas to enhance market coverage. As subjective norms are another significant factor, marketers should promote organic food consumption through family, celebrities, and society. The results obtained in this study indicate an insufficiently developed consumer awareness of both organic and functional food. The market for organic and functional food remains limited, although research suggests that organic producers tend to experience growth in terms of profitability indicators (Mitić & Čolović, 2022). It is essential to expand the product range in organic production and the food industry, ensure continuous supply, and, above all, implement appropriate marketing activities. One way to increase consumption is by informing and educating consumers about organic and functional food.

A limitation of this study is the lack of sample diversity, as most participants were young. Future research should aim to include a more diverse demographic to better reflect the general population's consumption habits. Additionally, as dietary habits vary across cultures (Kapelari et al., 2020; Nemeth et al., 2019), future studies should incorporate cultural norms and marketing contexts to explain the discrepancies in findings.

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