



## THE MOST COMMONLY USED COMMUNICATION CHANNELS AS A SOURCE OF INFORMATION FOR ORGANIC FOOD BUYERS IN SERBIA

Vladimir Mitić\*,  
[0000-0002-5488-0256]

Milica Čolović  
[0000-0002-8393-2158]

University Singidunum,  
Belgrade, Serbia

### Abstract:

The organic food market has shown constant but insufficient growth in recent decades due to a number of factors, the most notable of which are high prices and limited consumer awareness. Better consumer awareness can be achieved by using the most effective digital and traditional marketing channels. The aim of this paper is to examine which digital and traditional marketing channels are used by buyers to collect information about organic food. The research included 600 respondents from Serbia, and the SPSS program was used for data processing. The study used descriptive statistics and non-parametric techniques due to the distribution of scores that deviate from normal. The research results showed that buyers of organic food rely more on digital marketing channels, primarily social networks and websites. Among traditional marketing channels, TV, radio and newspapers remain the most influential sources of information.

### Keywords:

organic food, customers, digital marketing, traditional marketing, awareness.

### JEL Classification:

M37, Q13

## INTRODUCTION

Although the governments of many countries make significant efforts to increase organic food production by actively promoting sustainable production systems and providing substantial tax incentives and subsidies to organic food producers, a relatively small number of food producers decide to switch from conventional to organic production methods (Tampe, 2016). There are numerous reasons for this, such as: high initial capital, long time period of land conversion, low yields, high certification costs, complex procedures for obtaining the status of organic producer, insufficient customer demand and others (Delbridge, 2014; Lesur-Dumoulin *et al.*, 2017; McCartney & Valke, 2004; Ponti *et al.*, 2012). Insufficient consumer demand for organic food products remains one of the biggest barriers that slows down the growth of the organic food market.

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\*E-mail: mitic.vladimir1982@gmail.com



The smaller volume of organic food purchases is influenced by a large number of factors that have a negative impact on the consumer's decision to purchase organic food. There are a number of barriers to buying organic food, such as: high price of organic food (Gharibi & Karbasi, 2023), distrust in certification (Torres-Ruiz *et al.*, 2018), scarce supply (Nandi *et al.*, 2017), unavailability of organic food (Brył, 2018), insufficient consumer information (Shrestha & Baral, 2019), subjective norms (Von Meyer-Höfer *et al.*, 2015) and the unattractive design of used organic food packaging (Aydogdu & Kaya, 2020). According to the results of a large number of studies and surveys conducted among consumers, two obstacles to the purchase of organic food were singled out, namely: the high price of organic food and insufficient consumer information about the importance of organic food for health and environmental protection (Jarczok-Guzy, 2018; Mkhize & Ellis, 2020; Vukasović, 2016; Wijaya *et al.*, 2021). Therefore, eliminating or minimizing these negative purchase factors could significantly increase the frequency of organic food purchases by consumers.

When it comes to the high price of organic food, it is questionable to what extent it can be influenced to reduce it due to low yields, intensive and demanding production process and high costs. However, as far as insufficient consumer information is concerned, a lot can be done by educating consumers more about the importance of organic food production, and by sharing information about all the benefits that come from consuming it. As a useful tool for better familiarizing consumers with the concept of organic food and sharing information, both traditional marketing channels, such as television, radio, newspapers, billboards, customer recommendations and others, and digital channels, such as social networks, websites, blogs and the like, can be used. Therefore, the goal of this paper is to determine how to increase consumer awareness of the importance of organic production as one of the types of sustainable production, and which marketing channels are the most effective for sharing information with them.

The research examines whether consumers gather information about organic food mainly through traditional or digital media, and which types of organic food are most often used. Also, the differences between respondents will be examined when it comes to digital media, as an increasingly common way to share information with consumers, but also traditional marketing channels as an indispensable part of the marketing strategy of a large number of producers and sellers of organic food. The paper consists of five chapters. Following the introduction, the second part provides a review of the literature that highlights the problem of limited consumer awareness and discusses the previous studies addressing this topic. It also presents findings from research investigating which traditional and digital media are most commonly used by consumers to gather information about organic food. The third part outlines the sample of the research, defines the research problem and objectives, formulates the hypotheses, and describes the methodology that test them. For the sake of clarity, this part also discusses the obtained results. The final part is dedicated to the research conclusions, limitations, and recommendations for future studies in this area.



## LITERATURE REVIEW

Insufficient information among consumers about organic food refers to several aspects, from the methods used during production and its characteristics, through health benefits and wider social benefits, to ignorance of the logo and the way it is marked. Consumers are often not fully familiar with the specifics of organic food, such as the differences in the way of production, the use of pesticides, artificial fertilizers and GMOs, so they are not aware of what the label "organic" means or what standards products must meet to be considered organic. As a result, they are not even familiar with the health benefits of consuming organic food products, due to better nutritional value and the absence of artificial and harmful agents in them, so they are not ready to earn more money for their purchase (Hansmann *et al.*, 2020). Consumers may not be aware of the wider environmental benefits that organic production can bring, such as the preservation of biodiversity, reduction of soil and water pollution, and lower carbon dioxide emissions, so they are much less motivated to buy organic food (Heidari *et al.*, 2017; Hokazono & Hayashi, 2015; Yodkhum *et al.*, 2017). The lower frequency of buying organic food is also influenced by usual shopping habits, as indicated by a study conducted in Ecuador, the results of which showed that around 82% of consumers there mostly decide to buy food produced in a conventional way (Bósquez & Arias-Bolzmann, 2021).

One of the biggest problems consumers face when considering buying organic food is not knowing the logos and labels used to mark organic food. This resulted in a big barrier to buying organic food in the Republic of Serbia, since almost 40% of consumers do not know the national label used when marking organic food products (Vehapi & Mitić, 2023). The situation is somewhat better among consumers in the EU, where approximately 25% of consumers do not know the labels of organic products, so there are great challenges in retail settings, particularly in distinguishing organic products from conventional food (Zander *et al.*, 2015). In general, a large percentage of consumers do not know the logo and labels of organic food, which negatively affects the level of purchasing organic food. This issue becomes particularly important in retail environments where organic and conventional foods are often displayed side by side in stores and supermarkets, making it even more difficult for consumers to distinguish between them if they are not familiar with the labeling and logos used for this. For example, in Russia, low consumer awareness has led to major problems in distinguishing organic from conventional food (Bruschi *et al.*, 2015). Similarly, in Poland, insufficient knowledge of organic product labeling is the reason why customers have great problems distinguishing organic from conventional food, which negatively affects them when making a purchase decision (Wojciechowska-Solis & Soroka, 2017).

Even knowing how to label organic food is not enough to promote its purchase if consumers do not know what criteria organic food products must meet in order to obtain that status. Therefore, ignorance of the certification process leads to a high degree of mistrust that consumers have in products that have the status of organic (Vittersø & Tangeland, 2015). This is confirmed by the results of a study conducted in Greece, where the lack of information about the certification process has a negative impact on the frequency of organic food purchases by consumers there (Krystallis *et al.*, 2008). Therefore, better familiarization of consumers with the certification process and sharing of information can significantly improve and increase the level of purchasing organic food, which was also confirmed by research conducted in Vietnam, where due to better information among consumers, interest in organically produced rice increased, and at the same time, the frequency of purchases increased (My *et al.*, 2018).



Before some 30 years ago when informational technologies has not been developed yet, in order to share information about organic food and promote traditional marketing channels were mainly used. Nowadays, when IT general impact on all the aspects of human functioning producers and sellers are increasingly relying on digital marketing since, in this way, information can be shared to a wide range of users, while marketing costs are low and the employment of marketing experts is not required (Novytska *et al.*, 2021). This was also confirmed by research that included buyers of organic food from Tanzania and Kenya, who cited gathering information through social networks such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter as the main reason for being well informed (Wang *et al.*, 2019). Social networks make it possible to reach a larger number of customers without being limited to certain regions, thus achieving a better promotion of organic food and creating a competitive advantage over other companies (Li *et al.*, 2021). Therefore, marketing on social networks such as Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, Pinterest, LinkedIn and others is used to share information and communicate with customers, spread brand awareness and generate leads (Chatterjee & Kumar Kar, 2020). When it comes to the organic food sector, social networks provide marketers with inexpensive tools to exchange information and support interpersonal relationships (Guha *et al.*, 2018), stimulating consumer purchasing behavior (Mozas-Moral *et al.*, 2016) and increasing sales (Lu & Miller, 2019). Websites with information on the quality and certification of organic food have a significant influence on the purchase of organic food by consumers in China (Tariq *et al.*, 2019). Regarding to main demographic characteristic and their influence of organic food purchase, in the literature could be found that well-educated and high-income women are more willing to purchase organic food on e-commerce platforms than others. Moreover, other drivers, such as food quality attributes and people's attitudes towards green consumption and digital channels, affect people's willingness to buy organic food online (Palmeri *et al.*, 2024).

A thematic analysis of in-depth interviews conducted with eight organic and 12 conventional farmers in Ohio indicated that organic farmers are proactive in communicating with the public about their production practices, unlike conventional farmers, who focus on improving productivity. Furthermore, the organic farmers reported using different communication channels such as Facebook, flyers, and YouTube when communicating with consumers, while conventional farmers reported being busy working on their farms and not having time to communicate with consumers. Organic farmers' involvement in communication activities with the public about their production practices and products was reported to stem from their beliefs and values toward sustainable farming practices and environmental conservation. Furthermore, unlike conventional farmers, most organic farmers sold products directly to consumers, and as such, used communication as a marketing tool. The active involvement of organic farmers in communicating with consumers may, in part, be driven by increased media coverage highlighting the benefits of organic farming practices. On the other hand, limited involvement of conventional farmers in communicating with the public may be partly due to limited media coverage on the benefits of conventional farming (Masambuka-Kanchewa *et al.*, 2021).

Internet marketing is the best instrument through which the sale of organic food is supported. One study showed that consumers prefer to purchase organic food primarily on large platforms (66%) and eco-farms (33%), and that all surveyed consumers receive e-marketing messages for organic food. Moreover, as many as 84% of those surveyed have purchased the product under the influence of marketing messages (Borusiewicz *et al.*, 2024).



The results of one study have underscored the importance of carefully selecting influencers who resonate with the target demographics and can forge authentic connections with them (Kallioupi *et al.*, 2024). Moreover, the results suggest that harnessing the credibility of Food Experts of Influence (FEIs) can influence consumer behavior and potentially bolster the sales of organic products. They indicated that influencers' sexual orientation, appealing lifestyle, specialized knowledge in a particular domain, personal traits like beauty or sex appeal, and their follower count exert a considerable influence on consumer behavior, notably fostering positive attitudes towards organic products.

In order to fill the gap between social media platforms and traditional ways of advertising, one study examined how brand image and social media advertising affect consumers' choices to buy organic products. The obtained results suggest that social media has a broad and positive impact on consumer attention, interest, and search elements, unlike traditional methods that have already become obsolete (None & Agnihotri, 2025).

Development of digital marketing in the sphere of promoting organic products is in its infancy. This depends on the structure of producers, which typically consists of family farms or small farm enterprises with no more than 15 employees and no dedicated marketing personnel. Social networks have been identified as the main channels of digital marketing of enterprises – producers of organic products, as they do not require additional costs to hire a marketing specialist (Novytska *et al.*, 2021).

Furthermore, the integrative model of marketing communication shows the effectiveness of a combined use of several communication instruments: advertising that must integrate caravans as a new medium and revitalize the radio medium. Promotions at points of sale are less useful and must be supplemented by product scheduling, and the use of mobile support is essential to resolve the intermediation phenomenon observed in the organic products market. Finally, the use of traditional and mobile websites and social networks, which are being improved in SMEs, has very little chance of having a positive impact on organic consumption (Issafa, 2024).

## METHODOLOGY

The main goal of this research is to determine the extent to which consumers rely on traditional and digital marketing channels for information about organic food. The study also examines which traditional and digital marketing channels are most frequently used by consumers to gather information about organic food. The main hypothesis of this research is that buyers of organic food rely significantly more on digital marketing channels than on traditional ones (H1). It is further hypothesized that organic food buyers most frequently use social networks among digital marketing channels (H2), while among traditional marketing channels, organic food buyers primarily use television, radio and newspapers to gather information about the benefits of consuming organic food, as well as about its basic characteristics (H3). Additionally, it is hypothesized that, in general, traditional marketing channels nowadays lag far behind digital ones in terms of the number of consumers who rely on them when making a decision to buy organic food (H4). The hypotheses are directly linked to the core research question: Do consumers rely more on digital channels than on traditional ones, and if so, which specific channels they prefer. Testing these hypotheses will provide insight into whether the data support these assumptions and provide clarity on consumer behavior in the context of organic food purchases.



Data collection was conducted online using Google Forms and through in-person questionnaire administration. For the purposes of the current research, a new questionnaire – *Questionnaire on buyers of organic food* – was constructed, the metric characteristics of which proved to be reliable. The online questionnaire provides the necessary data to test the hypotheses about the use of digital versus traditional marketing channels.

Cronbach's  $\alpha$  coefficient in the current research had a value of 0.74. The questionnaire consists of 25 items presented on a five-point Likert scale. The Cronbach's  $\alpha$  coefficient of 0.74 indicates good internal consistency, ensuring that the items in the questionnaire reliably measure the same underlying concepts (e.g., consumer preferences for information sources). This reliability is particularly important for online surveys, as it confirms that respondents provide consistent answers across related items. The used questionnaire measures the frequency of organic food purchases, the main motives and barriers to buying organic products, and the preferred types of organic food purchases – these are the main subscales within the instrument.

In addition to the main questionnaire, a list of basic information about the respondent was applied, which registered the main socio-demographic characteristics, thus enriching and providing a better overview of the research sample. Before filling out the questionnaire, all respondents had to read the information about the purpose and goals of the research and give their consent to data processing exclusively for scientific purposes. Respondents are guaranteed complete anonymity. Only after giving their consent were they allowed to start filling out the questionnaire. The survey included 600 respondents with different socio-demographic characteristics, including gender, age, level of education, financial status and place of residence (Table 1). SPSS program version 26 was used for data processing. Descriptive statistics was used to present the results, and due to significant deviations from the normal distribution, non-parametric techniques such as the Kruskal-Wallis test and the Mann-Whitney U test were used to determine differences in the results between the measured variables. The Kruskal-Wallis test was used to examine differences in scores between multiple groups of subjects, while the Mann-Whitney U test was used to examine differences in scores between two groups of subjects.



## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The current research included 600 respondents of different gender, age, level of education, level of income and place of residence. For better insight and understanding, a more detailed description of the sample is shown in the following table.

**Table 1.** Socio-demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Socio-demographic characteristics	N	Percentage
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	150	25
Female	450	75
<i>Total</i>	600	100
<b>Age</b>		
From 18 to 24 years	114	19
From 25 to 39 years	276	46
From 40 to 64 years	185	30.8
Over 65 years	25	4.2
<i>Total</i>	600	100
<b>Education</b>		
Primary school	15	2.5
High school	215	35.8
Higher school / vocational studies	63	10.5
Faculty / master studies	280	46.7
PhD	27	4.5
<i>Total</i>	600	100
<b>Incomes</b>		
Below average	63	10.5
Average	480	80
Above average	57	9.5
<i>Total</i>	600	100
<b>Area</b>		
Urban	382	63.7
Rural	218	36.3
<i>Total</i>	600	100





The sample was convenient and consisted of 600 respondents, of which 150 were men and 450 were women. It comprised only adult respondents, with the largest age group between 25 and 39, followed by those between 40 and 64, while significantly fewer were those between 18 and 24 and those over 65. Regarding education, 46% of respondents held faculty or master's degree, while 35.8% had completed secondary school. The smallest proportion had either a doctorate or only primary education. Regarding income, most respondents reported to have an average income, with nearly equal number stating to have incomes below or above average. Almost two-thirds of the respondents live in urban areas (Table 1).

The obtained results showed that consumers collect information about organic food primarily through digital marketing channels (about 64%), while approximately 36% of consumers primarily rely on traditional marketing channels (Table 2).

**Table 2.** Representation of the Use of Marketing Channels to Collect Information about Organic Food

Types of marketing	N	Percent
Digital	383	63.8
Traditional	217	36.2
<i>Total</i>	600	100

The following table shows the results of the statistical significance of the obtained differences in scores. The results showed that there are significant statistical differences in the scores between the two groups of respondents as regards marketing channels for gathering information from consumers in Serbia ( $U = 14355.000$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ) (Table 3).

**Table 3.** Mann-Whitney U test Results - Statistical Significance of Obtained Differences

	Types of marketing
Mann-Whitney U	14355.000
Sig.	.028

Group variable: source of information

Based on the results of the Mann-Whitney U test, significant statistical differences were found in the use of marketing channels for obtaining information about organic food, with digital marketing channels being favored over traditional ones (Table 4). A potential reason for this may be that through digital marketing channels, consumers can easily and quickly be informed about organic food, with a vast number of available data. Namely, digital marketing channels, including social networks, blogs, websites, forums and others, allow quick and easy access to a large amount of information about organic products such as origin, certificates, nutritional values, reviews and experiences of other consumers, which can significantly facilitate and speed up the decision to buy organic food among consumers.



**Table 4.** Differences in the Use of Different Types of Marketing by Consumers in Serbia

	Types of marketing	N	MR	ΣR
<b>Collecting information about organic food</b>	Traditional	383	335.67	79274.00
	Digital	217	211.68	37804.00
	<i>Total</i>	600		

There are a number of different marketing channels available to organic food buyers to gather information about organic food, including digital and traditional sources that consumers use to learn more about products, origins, quality and producers. Representation of different types of marketing channels for gathering information from buyers of organic food in Serbia is shown in the Table 5.

**Table 5.** Representation of the Use of Different Types of Traditional and Digital Marketing Channels of Organic Food Buyers

	Digital	N	Percent	Tradiconal	N	Percent
<b>Sources of information most used by organic food buyers</b>	Social networks	215	56.1	TV, radio and newspapers	106	48.9
	Websites	109	28.5	Billboards, posters and flyers	59	27.2
	Blogs and web magazines	18	4.7	Tastings and promotions in stores	8	3.7
	Forums and communities	26	6.8	Fairs and events	19	8.7
	Email marketing and newsletters	9	2.3	Recommendations from acquaintances and family	25	11.5
	SEO and Google searches	6	1.6			
	<i>Total</i>	383	100		217	100

Considering digital channels, it can be seen that organic food buyers in Serbia predominantly use social networks – as many as 56% of respondents. Websites are the second most popular source, favored by 28.5% by respondents, while for the purpose of gathering information about organic food, forums and online communities are in the last place.

Among digital marketing channels, blogs and web magazines are the least used, preferred by nearly 5% of respondents. About 2% of respondents reported using email marketing and newsletters, while SEO and Google searches are the first source for gathering information for 1.6% of respondents (Table 4). Regarding traditional marketing channels, TV, radio and newspapers are the sources of information chosen by the largest number of respondents, almost 49%. These were followed by billboards, posters and flyers, which are preferred by around 27% of respondents. Recommendations from acquaintances and family (11.5% of respondents), fairs and events (8.7% of respondents), and in-store tastings and promotions (3.7% of respondents) are the least used of traditional marketing channels for gathering information.



The Kruskal-Wallis test was used to examine the differences in scores between multiple groups of respondents regarding the digital marketing channels they use to gather information about organic food.

**Table 6.** Representation of the Use of Different Types of Traditional and Digital Marketing Channels of Organic Food Buyers

	Social networks	Websites	Blogs and web magazines	Forums and communities	Email marketing and newsletters	SEO and Google searches
$\chi^2$	19.856	14.497	4.547	6.746	1.583	.942
df	5	5	5	5	5	5
Sig.	.004	.031	.325	.228	.753	.869

Group variable: source of information

Based on the previous table, it can be seen that the obtained differences in the scores of the respondents are at a statistically significant level, when it comes to social networks ( $\chi^2 = 19.856$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ) and websites ( $\chi^2 = 14.497$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ).

**Table 7.** Differences in the Use of Digital Marketing Channels to Collect Information

	Digital marketing channels	N	MR
Collecting information about organic food	Social networks	215	345.72
	Websites	109	269.44
	Blogs and web magazines	18	172.67
	Forums and communities	26	187.73
	Email marketing and newsletters	9	121.64
	SEO and Google searches	6	114.58
	<b>Total</b>	383	

The results of the Kruskal-Wallis test indicate that social networks (MR = 345.72) are the most frequently used of digital marketing channels as a source for collecting information about organic food, while websites are in second place (MR = 269.44). Buyers use forums and online communities (MR = 187.73) and blogs (MR = 172.67) as sources of information about organic food, while email marketing and newsletters (MR = 121.64) and google searches (MR = 114.58) are by far the least used (See Table 6). A potential explanation for the fact that social networks are most frequently used for gathering information may be that they are easily accessible and are used by a large number of people in Serbia. Also, social networks such as Instagram, Facebook and TikTok allow attractive presentation of organic products using images and video content, showcasing the organic food and methods of preparation. On the other hand, websites allow customers to collect verified and detailed information about the composition and origin of organic food, about the agency that issued the certificate, as well as about the method of cultivation or processing, which increases transparency and trust in the quality of organic products, which is especially important for customers who take care of their health.



The Kruskal-Wallis test was used to examine the differences in scores between multiple groups of respondents when using different types of traditional marketing channels to gather information about organic food.

**Table 8.** Results of the Kruskal-Wallis test - Statistical Significance of the Obtained Differences with Traditional Marketing Channels

	TV, radio and newspapers	Billboards, posters and flyers	Tastings and promotions in stores	Fairs and events	Recommendations from acquaintances and family
$\chi^2$	17.325	10.634	3.873	6.127	7.537
df	4	4	4	4	4
Sig.	.009	.269	.603	.496	.441

Group variable: source of information

Based on the previous table, it can be seen that the obtained differences in the scores of several groups of respondents are at a statistically significant level, when television, radio and newspapers are the channels of traditional sharing of information about organic food ( $\chi^2 = 17.325$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ).

**Table 9.** Differences in Using Traditional Marketing Channels to Gather Information

Collecting information about organic food	Traditional marketing channels	N	MR
	TV, radio and newspapers	106	275.65
	Billboards, posters and flyers	59	210.86
	In-store tastings and promotions	8	140.21
	Fairs and events	19	170.96
	Recommendations from acquaintances and family	25	188.33
	<i>Total</i>	217	

The results obtained using the Kruskal-Wallis test showed that there is statistical significance in the differences regarding traditional marketing channels and that TV, radio and newspapers are mainly used as sources of information about organic food (MR = 275.65). Billboards, posters and flyers (MR = 210.86) are second in terms of representation among traditional marketing channels, followed by recommendations from acquaintances and family (MR = 188.33), fairs and events (MR = 170.96) and in-store tastings and promotions (MR = 140.21). The obtained results can be explained by the fact that television, radio and print (newspapers) are ahead of other traditional marketing channels due to their greater reliability, wider availability and influence of these media in certain demographic groups. Namely, TV commercials or shows about health can reach a large number of viewers in a short period of time, and among them there are many who are not active on the Internet and do not use social networks. In addition, many television and radio shows deal with healthy eating, ecology, or home production, which is directly related to organic food. A potential explanation why billboards, posters and flyers are often used as sources of information used by organic food buyers may be that they are located in busy places (beside roads, in the city center, in markets), where they are exposed to a large number of people every day. Also, visual materials such as posters and flyers often use short, clear messages and attractive images, which is ideal for promoting natural and healthy products.



## CONCLUSION

Although the organic food and beverage market has recorded constant growth in recent decades, it is still not at the expected level, and this market does not occupy a significant share of the global food and beverage market. The steep cost of organic products, their limited availability and variety, unattractive and inadequate packaging, lack of consumer trust in their quality and certification, as well as poor access to information, are key elements that greatly discourage customers from purchasing organic food or lead them to buy it in much smaller amounts, ultimately diminishing the market value. Although there are numerous factors that negatively affect the purchase of organic food, the high price of organic food and insufficient consumer information are among the most prominent.

The aim of this research was to investigate whether organic food buyers use more traditional or digital information sources to gather information about organic food. The results of the current research showed that the largest number of buyers of organic food collect information from digital marketing channels. This finding confirmed the first research hypothesis (H1). Among digital marketing channels, customers are mostly informed about organic food through social networks, which is in line with the second research hypothesis (H2). Television, radio and newspapers are the main traditional marketing channels used by customers to obtain information about organic food, thereby confirming the third hypothesis of the current research (H3). Although social networks and websites are most often cited as sources of information used by organic food buyers, a significant number of buyers rely on traditional marketing channels, primarily TV, radio and newspapers, as well as billboards, posters and flyers, which partially confirms the fourth research hypothesis (H4).

The significance of the research is that it provides guidance to producers and sellers of organic food which marketing channels are most effective for sharing information with customers in order to promote organic food more efficiently and thus increase its demand from customers. Although numerous studies on organic food have been conducted in Serbia, relatively few have investigated the sources used by customers to gather information about organic food.

This study contributes to existing knowledge by providing insights into the sources of information that organic food buyers use, specifically distinguishing between traditional and digital marketing channels. While previous research has explored various factors influencing organic food purchasing decisions, this study adds valuable findings regarding the dominance of digital channels – particularly social media – over traditional sources like TV, radio, and print media. It highlights the need for producers and sellers to focus on digital platforms for more effective communication with consumers. Additionally, it emphasizes the importance of integrating traditional marketing methods to complement digital channels, as both are still relevant for informing customers about organic products. The research fills a gap in the literature by specifically investigating the sources of information about organic food in Serbia, where such studies are relatively limited.

Potential limitations of the research may be that the research sample is not uniform in terms of gender, age, level of education, region of residence and other socio-demographic characteristics, which means that all groups of respondents are not equally represented. If the sample were extended to a larger number of respondents, with equal inclusion of all regions in Serbia, different research results might be obtained, reflecting regional variations in consumer buying habits and differences related to other socio-demographic characteristics.



In addition to the main limitation related to sample size and certain demographic diversity, this research also shows geographical limitation, limited scope of examined communication channels, and potential overemphasis on social media. Additionally, external factors, such as economic conditions, regulatory changes, or market trends (e.g., the rise of plant-based diets or environmental sustainability movements) may also affect consumer behaviors. These factors might not have been fully explored in the study but could influence the effectiveness of marketing channels and the organic food market's growth potential. These limitations highlight areas where further research could build on the current study's findings, address gaps, and provide a more nuanced understanding of the factors influencing consumer behavior toward organic food.

Future research could examine how the use of marketing channels by organic food buyers varies according to socio-demographic characteristics – are there any differences in the scores when looking at people of different gender, age, education, marital, work and financial status and so on. This would certainly be a different type of research compared to the current one, but it would significantly supplement the results of this and similar studies and additionally enrich the literature of these increasingly interesting and dominant phenomena in marketing, processes of communication with consumers and consumer psychology in general – which are scientific fields that are growing every day in both theoretical and practical terms. Additionally, a comparison with neighboring countries could be made to identify marketing channels consumers use to gather information about organic food. This could contribute to a comprehensive understanding of consumer habits, responses, and behaviors regarding modern communication channels across the Balkans, a region with deep common roots, tradition, history, and culture shared among peoples who, due to the unfortunate circumstances of the breakup of Yugoslavia, separated and developed and some of their own new specificities.

Furthermore, future studies could also investigate how different digital marketing platforms (e.g., Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, blogs, etc.) impact consumer attitudes and purchasing behaviors toward organic food. This could help to better understand which digital channels are most effective for targeting specific customer segments. Also research in the future could focus on exploring how trust in digital marketing channels compares to trust in traditional marketing methods (TV, radio, print), particularly in the context of organic food in more detail. This would help to clarify whether consumers feel more confident using information from one channel over another and how this influences their purchasing decisions. Given the rapid evolution of digital marketing, it would be valuable to conduct longitudinal studies that track changes over time in consumer preferences for information sources. This could reveal trends and shifts in consumer behavior as new digital platforms emerge or as traditional media evolves. Another important thing that future research could focus on is to compare how consumers in different countries or regions (e.g., Serbia vs. other European or global markets) use digital in comparison to traditional sources for organic food information. This could provide insights into cultural differences in consumer behavior and marketing effectiveness. Some of them could also explore the role of influencers and peer recommendations on social media in driving organic food purchases. Understanding the power of word-of-mouth and influencer marketing could inform strategies for organic food brands seeking to build trust and increase sales.



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## NAJČEŠĆE KORIŠĆENI KOMUNIKACIONI KANALI KAO IZVOR INFORMACIJA ZA KUPCE ORGANSKE HRANE U SRBIJI

### Rezime:

Tržište organske hrane pokazalo je konstantan, ali nedovoljan rast poslednjih decenija zbog niza faktora, od kojih su najznačajniji visoke cene i ograničena svest potrošača. Bolja svest potrošača može se postići korišćenjem najefikasnijih digitalnih i tradicionalnih marketinških kanala. Cilj ovog rada je da se ispita koje digitalne i tradicionalne marketinške kanale kupci koriste za prikupljanje informacija o organskoj hrani. Istraživanje je obuhvatilo 600 ispitanika iz Srbije, a za obradu podataka korišćen je SPSS program. U studiji su korišćene deskriptivna statistika i neparametarske tehnike zbog raspodele rezultata koji odstupaju od normale. Rezultati istraživanja su pokazali da se kupci organske hrane više oslanjaju na digitalne marketinške kanale, pre svega društvene mreže i veb stranice. Među tradicionalnim marketinškim kanalima TV, radio i novine ostaju najuticajniji izvori informacija.

### Ključne reči:

organska hrana,  
kupci,  
digitalni marketing,  
tradicionalni marketing,  
svest.

### JEL klasifikacija:

M37, Q13