



Determinants of Consumer Purchase Intentions of Organically Produced Food: The Role of Environmental Concerns, Health, Trust and Accessibility

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ABSTRACT

This research forms part of a wider study which investigates a series of key determinants which were identified from existing research, and considers their impact on consumer purchase intentions towards organically produced foods in the Indian cities of Chennai and Bengaluru. This paper focuses on the collective testing of four of these key determinants, which is unique from any previous studies, in terms of understanding their relational significance on buyer behaviour from these cities. Five research objectives were generated, and these were subsequently addressed by five hypotheses. Random sampling of 1300 supermarket shoppers was conducted using primarily a quantitative questionnaire, with qualitative data being gathered on the reasoning behind respondents' purchasing intentions. Multiple regression analysis was adopted for the four key determinants of: environmental concerns, health and life style, safety and trust, and subjective norms — and results indicated that each had a significant influence on consumer purchase intentions. Results for health and lifestyle factors showed a negative significance towards organic food purchase intentions, suggesting that Indian consumers were suspicious towards claimed health benefits of organic foods. Consequently, this finding shows little influence on organic food purchases, which contradicts the findings of previous studies. Notably, safety and trust failed to provide any significant level of association with purchase intentions of consumers, and this may be due to a lack of consumer confidence towards Indian government policies on organic food production, hence, further research is required to explore this particular determinant. Furthermore, content analysis of the qualitative data alluded to the lack of consumer accessibility to organically produced products — and this was seen as a major problem for industry development for the Indian government, manufacturers and strategists.

1. INTRODUCTION

Over the past few years, interest in the demand of organically produced foods has risen considerably worldwide because of increased awareness of environmental issues, health awareness, and the sustainable connection to consumption. Nevertheless, the intention to buy organic products shows high diversity in various cultural and socio-economic settings. The organic food market in India has been characterized by changes in opinion

and has potential to grow especially in cities such as Chennai and Bengaluru though consumers have reservations regarding the same due to perceptions, easy availability and trust. The research aims at investigating the overall impacts of four major constructs of environmental concerns, health and lifestyles, safety and trust, and subjective norms on consumer intentions to buy organic foods. This is unlike other past studies that tend to analyze these factors individually and

therefore the study will have an integrated form and the aim of the study is to give an overall map of how these determinants interact to influence consumer behaviour in India.

1.1. Significance and Purpose of the Study

The significance of the proposed research consists in the possibility to fill the gap between the growing popularity of organic products and a rather slow speed of the market adaptation in India. The study provided empirical information based on the interpretation of both quantitative and qualitative data of 1,300 supermarket shoppers to enable policy makers, manufacturers and marketers to gain an insight on the barriers and motivators affecting the purchase of organic foods. Knowledge on these dynamics is important in the development of specific strategies that would raise consumer confidence, enhance accessibility and carry out promotions on organic products (Chavadi et al., 2024). The main goals of the study include: (1) determining how much environmental concerns, health and lifestyle, safety and trust, subjective norms impact the purchase intentions towards organic foods; (2) identifying the strongest predictors of consumer behavior in this group; and (3) to give practical recommendations to the increase of adoption of organic foods in the urban markets in India.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. Environmental Concerns

Environmental concerns can be defined as the level of awareness and care of people towards environmental matters, i.e., pollution, depletion of resources, ecological balance. To the extent of consumer behavior, these issues affect consumer purchasing behavior in the sense that consumers are encouraged to buy goods that cause minimal harm to the ecosystem. Environmental Psychology and green consumerism ideologies state that more environmentally conscious citizens tend to consume environmentally friendly products including the purchase of organic foods since the individuals perceive that their purchase will lead to environmental protection (Zsidisin & Siferd, 2001).

2.2. Health and Life Style

Health and lifestyle is associated with the awareness, attitudes and practices of people with regard to a healthy balanced life. Such variable includes food preferences, fitness, the desire to consume food that is natural and less processed.

Based on health belief model, the value of healthy lifestyle may result in the consumers experiencing organic foods as more nourishing and safe, which can affect their buying behavior. Nevertheless, this determinant may have a positive or negative impact on purchasing intentions depending on the perception of a person on the actual health benefits of organic foods (Kinderman et al., 2011).

2.3. Safety and Trust

Safety and trust are the terms describing the attitude of the consumers to the quality, authenticity and the regulatory response of organic food products. Trust is constructed on the fact that manufacturers, retailers and certifiers bodies are committed to safety, and honest labeling. According to the theory of planned behavior, an increased level of trust with regard to the safety of a product and trust in the institutions devoted to the control thereof positively affects purchase intentions. On the other hand, absence of trust or even doubt in health statements and certification authenticity may reduce the desire of the consumer to purchase organic products (McLain & Jarrell, 2007).

2.4. Subjective Norms

Subjective norms can be defined as perceived pressures on one to do or not to do a given behavior by family members, friends, or the society. In the theory of planned behavior, subjective norms have a profound impact on consumer behavior in the way they affect the attitudes and perceived behavioral control. In the organic food market, when powerful social groups advocate or cherish sustainable consumption, then people will tend to buy organic foods to support such social norms in order to uphold a good social status (Belanche et al., 2020).

2.5. Purchase Intentions of Consumers to Organically Produced Foods

Consumer purchase intention is a probability that a consumer will purchase a product later on, depending on attitudes, perceptions and external stimuli. With regard to organic food, the purchase intention expresses the willingness of interested consumers to buy organic foods because of the assumed positive health effects, environmental safety, and the compatibility with their principles. The intention is influenced by a synthesis of cognitive (awareness, beliefs), affective (emotions, trust) and normative (social influence) factors, with regard to consumer decision-making and

behavioral intention models (Bowden & Mirzaei, 2020).

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1.H1: *Environmental issues Environmental issues are associated with purchase intentions (organic)*

In previous studies, it is always indicated that a pro-environmental attitude is a robust antecedent of green purchase intentions. In the context of the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), environmental concern leads to positive attitudes back towards eco-labelled products, making people more willing to undergo payments and desire to purchase organic foods (Pal et al., 2018). The European and Asian studies show higher intention and actual purchasing behavior among the consumers who believe that organic production decreases pollution levels, preserves biodiversity, and reduces the use of chemicals. This effect is further enhanced by the presence of environmental self-identity and moral norms since organic choices are depicted as morally and socially responsible choices.

Mechanistically, environmental concern has been shown to work in two ways: through perceived effectiveness (i.e., the belief that the purchase makes a difference) and through value belief norm pathways that transform the abstract fear of ecological issues into concrete practices such as the purchase of organic (McLain & Jarrell, 2007). The relationship between concern and intention is fortified when eco-information is salient (clear labels, credible story about farming activities; the opposite of this relationship is diminished when green claims are ambiguous. In general, it can be concluded that environmental issues have an overall positive effect on intentions to purchase organic.

3.2.H2: *Health & lifestyle =Purchase intentions (organic)*

Among the most often mentioned motives of choosing organic food are health benefits (less residues, more natural, and nutritionally superior). This has been described as Health Belief Model (HBM) on perceived susceptibility (the risk of diet) and perceived benefits (protection of health) that collectively increases intention. Fitness orientation, clean-eating habits, and preventive health behaviors are lifestyle factors that are significantly and reliably associated with more

robust organic purchase intentions. Personal health, as opposed to environmental motives, is ranked as the leading factor that made individuals attempt or continue using organic products in most markets (Guillory et al., 2022).

Context sensitivity notwithstanding, evidence may be context sensitive: in case of health claims, when consumers question the credibility of the health claims or are uninformed about the certification, health-intention is weakened or even becomes nonsignificant. Transparent labeling, education campaigns, and third party endorsements are usually used to reinstate the positive effect by lowering uncertainty. Net net, the evidence on the significant positive effect of health/lifestyle orientation on the intention to buy organic is in all previous researches, with quality and trust of information as essential variables.

3.3.H3: *Safety and trust--Purchase intentions (organic)*

Reliance on certifications, regulators, and retailers is critical in transforming the overall pro-organic attitudes into practical purchase intentions. Events of food safety increase awareness of the concern about quality assurance, and the logos of a certification, traceability systems, and country of origin cues become more persuasive. Empirical studies indicate that safety perceptions of products and institutional trust decrease risk perceptions and increases perceived value, and ultimately increases intention to buy organic foods. In cases where the third-party certification is seen and trusted, the intention effects are the greatest (Oyelami et al., 2020).

On the other hand, low institutional trust or suspiciousness of labels reduces the safety-intention relationship- even when the consumers claim to be worried about the existence of chemical residues. This trend is highly noticeable in the so-called emerging economies where regulation compliance and label recognition are disparate. Interventions that promote transparency (QR codes, farm-to-fork stories) and the reputation of a retailer are likely to reinstate the positive relationship. All in all, the literature is evidence to a favorable effect of safety and trust on organic purchase intentions, as long as there are credible assurance mechanisms.

3.4.H4: *Subjective norms organic -> Purchase intentions*

In TPB, subjective norms; perceived expectations

of family, friends and valued others, has been found to be a powerful contributor to green behavioral intentions. Research indicates that social acceptance of sustainable consumption, peer suggestions and the role of influencer/ community evangelists are the most effective ways to increase the intention of consumers to purchase organic. Both descriptive norms (what others do) and injunctive norms (what others think a person ought to do) are important; social influence via the visible availability of organic options into social communities can be a catalyst to uptake (Bandara & Amarasena, 2018).

Social norms have other interactions with identity and lifestyle where people who are entrenched in pro-health or pro-environmental situations are under normative pressure which increases the intentions above and beyond personal attitude. The campaigns which emphasize the increase in organic consumption (“people like you use organic”) and use credible referents (people, nutritionists, community leaders) work reliably in terms of increasing the norm-intention pathway. The evidence base can therefore be said to support positive impact of subjective norms on the intentions to buy organic foods (Seo et al., 2021).

3.5. H5: Unavailability/access barriers → Purchase intentions (organic)

The notion of availability and access, such as stock availability, proximity of stores and assortment are the building blocks of intention formation through perceived behavioral control (TPB). Many studies record that constrained shelf space, erratic availability and thin assortments dampen intention by indicating an increase in search costs and a drop in feasibility. When there are cheaper conventional alternatives everywhere, price premiums aggravate the access issue. Conversely, wider in-store availability and convenient means (e.g., modern retail, e-commerce) improve perceptions of ease and raise intentions in turn (Conner et al., 2017).

Access to information is a parallel limitation: in a situation where organic products are difficult to locate, they also receive a reduced set of cues (labels, in-store education), which blunts both the development of attitude and normative strengthening. Distribution-density interventions, stock-consistency interventions, and shelf-signage curation interventions all increase stated intentions and conversion on almost any measure.

The literatures thus suggest the existence of a negative correlation between in accessibilities (and other access obstacles) and the willingness of consumers to purchase organic foods.

3.6. Hypothesis Development

H1: The environmental issues positively influence the purchase intentions of consumers to organically produced foods.

H2: Health and lifestyle positively influence consumer purchase intentions of organically produced foods in a significant way.

H3: Safety and trust have a positive impact on the consumer purchase intentions when it is organically produced food.

H4: Subjective norms positively influence the consumer purchase intentions towards the organically produced foods

H5: The unavailability of organically produced foods adversely influences the consumer buying intentions with respect to organically produced foods.

3.7. Research Model

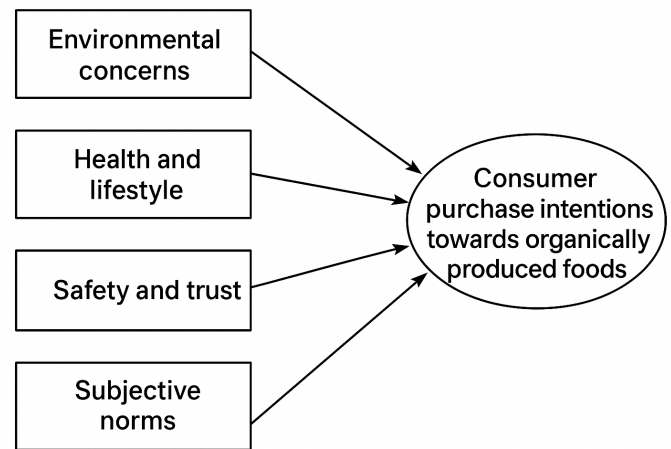


Figure 1: Conceptual Research Model

4. METHODOLOGY

4.1. Research Design

A quantitative research design was used to study how the key determinants, environmental concerns, health and lifestyle, safety and trust and subjective norms impacted consumer purchase intentions towards organically produced foods in the cities of Chennai and Bengaluru in India. This was selected because it is possible to test hypotheses statistically and also to determine the significance of the relation between the variables. The key analytical method was multiple regression

analysis because it allowed estimating the direct effect of each determinant on purchase intentions. Besides, qualitative information was provided by including content analysis information that adds a layer to the interpretation of results and contextualizes consumer attitudes and behaviors.

4.2. Population and Sampling

The target population included the supermarket shoppers of Chennai and Bengaluru who were the target market of organically produced foods. Random sampling technique was then used to eliminate the possibility of a biased choice of participants, thus improving the representativeness of the sample. The sample size of respondents was 1,300 people, which gave a large data set to make a strong statistical analysis.

4.3. Data Instrument and data collection

The main data collection tool used was the structured questionnaire that was aimed at capturing the perception of the respondents on the four key determinants and also intentions of making purchases. The questionnaire comprised closed-end questions that were based on Likert-scale items allowing the quantitative analysis, and open questions that provided the qualitative information on the motivations driving consumers to select a product. The data was gathered in-store and by direct contact with the shoppers located in different supermarkets. This strategy guaranteed the presence of active shoppers within the purchasing context which guaranteed a high probability of getting correct and appropriate

Table 1: Demographic Data

Demographic Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	670	51.5
	Female	630	48.5
Age Group	18-25 years	290	22.3
	26-35 years	420	32.3
	36-45 years	330	25.4
	46 years and above	260	20.0
Job Role	Student	240	18.5
	Professional/Executive	510	39.2
	Business Owner	190	14.6
	Homemaker	220	16.9
	Others	140	10.8
Shopping Experience	Less than 1 year	180	13.8
	1-3 years	460	35.4
	4-6 years	380	29.2
	More than 6 years	280	21.5

answers. Quantitative data were drafted with the help of regression techniques and qualified answers went through content analysis in order to formulate common themes and give further information on the barriers and motivators to the organic food purchasers.

5. DATA ANALYSIS

Table 1 shows that the demographic aspect of the respondents has quite a balanced gender distribution, with a slight majority of males (51.5 percent) compared to females (48.5 percent). Most of the respondents are in the age bracket of 26 35 years (32.3%) with the other age bracket of 36 45 years coming next (25.4%) indicating that most of the buyers of organically produced foods are in their economically active, and health-conscious years. Regarding the occupation, the largest group is a professional and executive (39.2%), in which the purchasing power is more significant and perhaps the interest in organic products is higher, whereas students (18.5%) and homemakers (16.9%) form significant percentages. In terms of the shopping experience, the majority of the respondents have been buying groceries during 1-3 years (35.4%) or 4-6 years (29.2%), which means that the target audience is quite experienced with some set buying habits. Those demographic trends can indicate that a varied range of consumers influences purchase intentions regarding organically produced foods, and a large number of them have the financial resources and experience to take part in sustainable consumption.

As indicated by the descriptive statistics in Table 2,

the majority of the constructs are highly agreed upon by the respondents, with the highest mean (M = 4.25, SD = 0.62) belonging to the construct of Health and Lifestyle, with Consumer Purchase Intentions (M = 4.20, SD = 0.66) and Environmental Concerns (M = 4.12, SD = 0.68) following closely, which means that awareness of health and environmental responsibility are among the primary motivators of organic food interest. The

mean of Safety and Trust (M = 4.08, SD = 0.71) indicates confidence in organic products by the consumers. Subjective Norms has a mean slightly less (M = 3.95, SD = 0.75) and implies that social influence is medium in its impact, whereas Unavailability of Organic Foods has the lowest mean (M = 3.48, SD = 0.82), which indicates that the inaccessibility of products is one of the significant barriers to purchase intentions.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics

Construct	Mean	Standard Deviation (SD)	Minimum	Maximum	N
Environmental Concerns	4.12	0.68	2.10	5.00	1300
Health and Lifestyle	4.25	0.62	2.50	5.00	1300
Safety and Trust	4.08	0.71	2.00	5.00	1300
Subjective Norms	3.95	0.75	1.80	5.00	1300
Unavailability of Organic Foods	3.48	0.82	1.50	5.00	1300
Consumer Purchase Intentions (Organic Products)	4.20	0.66	2.40	5.00	1300

The results of the correlation in Table 3 indicate that Health and Lifestyle (r = 0.66) is the strongest positive relationship, followed by Environmental Concerns (r = 0.64) that are the most persuasive drivers of Consumer Purchase Intentions. The value of correlation between Safety and Trust is

also high (r = 0.63), which underlines the significance of credibility of products. Unavailability of Organic Foods on the other hand has a strong negative correlation (r = -0.36) meaning that purchase intentions may be inhibited when they are not available.

Table 3: Correlation Coefficients

Construct	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Environmental Concerns	1					
2. Health and Lifestyle	0.61**	1				
3. Safety and Trust	0.58**	0.60**	1			
4. Subjective Norms	0.55**	0.52**	0.50**	1		
5. Unavailability of Organic Foods	-0.32**	-0.28**	-0.25**	-0.21**	1	
6. Consumer Purchase Intentions (Organic)	0.64**	0.66**	0.63**	0.57**	-0.36**	1

The results of the multiple regression in Table 4, 5, and 6 show that all five predictors exert significant effects on the consumer purchase intentions about the organically produced foods (p < 0.01 in all variables). Of the positive predictors, Health and Lifestyle (beta = 0.298) presented as the highest

driver in purchasing decisions, immediately followed by Safety and Trust (beta = 0.241) and Environmental Concerns (beta = 0.215) and this shows that consumers are influenced by health benefits, the safety of the product and environmental concern during purchasing a product.

Table 4: Model Summary

Model	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.763	0.582	0.571	0.412

Table 5: ANOVA

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	48.215	5	9.643	56.842	0.000
Residual	34.578	204	0.170		
Total	82.793	209			

Table 6: Multiple Regression Coefficients

Predictor Variable	Unstandardized B	Std. Error	Standardized Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	0.512	0.142	—	3.606	0.000
Environmental Concerns	0.214	0.044	0.215	4.864	0.000
Health and Lifestyle	0.301	0.049	0.298	6.143	0.000
Safety and Trust	0.246	0.046	0.241	5.348	0.000
Subjective Norms	0.187	0.048	0.182	3.896	0.000
Unavailability of Organic Foods (negative impact)	-0.162	0.049	-0.156	-3.306	0.001

The other factor is the Subjective Norms (beta = 0.182) that also impacted positively which is an indication of the influence of the social system in buying behavior. On the contrary, Unavailability of Organic Foods revealed negative relationship at 0.01 level (beta = -0.156), which affirmed the fact that inaccessibility also prevents purchase intentions. With a variance of 58.2 percent explained by the model it means that the model has high predictive power.

6. DISCUSSION

The results of this investigation support the notion that environmental issues are one of the key determinants of customer purchase intent in regard to organically grown foods, which is consistent with earlier research on identifying sustainability as an important driver in green consumerism (Joshi & Rahman, 2019). People know more and more about the environmental concerns of their choice of purchasing, and the findings demonstrate that they perceive organic goods as the method to make a contribution to environmental preservation. The strongest predictor of purchase intention was health and lifestyle as per the previous studies done by Rana and Paul (2017) where health consciousness was an effective determinant of superior demand to organic product. The beneficial influence of safety and trust also helps to prove the point that trust in the authenticity and safety guarantee of a product is one of the catalysts of organic consumption, which is supported by Thgersen et al. (2019), who state that trust in organic labeling highly affects the purchase behavior.

Furthermore, subjective norms were determined to have a significant impact on initiation of purchase intentions implying that social influence and peer suggestions are important in the promotion of organic food purchases. This

coincides with the Theory of Planned Behavior by Ajzen (1991) that places emphasis on the issue of social pressure to influence consumer behavior. Interestingly, it was also verified that unavailability has a negative impact on the intention to purchase, which means that even in case with the positive attitudes, the lack of access to the organic products is a significant factor, which is also reflected by Hughner et al. (2007). This implies that with increased levels of supply chains and availability, the market penetration of organic foods can be improved considerably. Altogether, the findings confirm the hypotheses offered and contribute to the literature on the topic, as they show the relationship between all these three constructs in their ability to explain a large percentage of variance in consumer purchase intentions within the framework of organic food consumption.

7. CONCLUSION

This paper establishes that environmental issues, health and lifestyle, safety and trust as well as subjective norms are important antecedents to consumer purchase intentions towards organically produced foods whereas unavailability is also a potent hindrance to consumer purchase intentions. The findings reconfirm the assumption that the more consumers are concerned with ecological sustainability, personal health, safety of products, and social power, the more they are likely to purchase organic products, in case they are available on the market. These results support theoretical bases of the Theory of Planned Behavior and add empirical data to the existing evidence base about organic food consumption, especially in the places with emerging awareness and demand but inaccessibility issues.

• Practical Implications and Recommendations in Future Research

Practically, marketing, retailing and policy makers

ought to concentrate on nourishing consumer confidence with clear food labels, health benefit ads, and environmental certifications as well as dealing with the availability aspect in better distribution channels. Due to the accessibility barrier, a greater presence in physical stores and online platforms can reduce the mentioned barrier and targeted campaigns based on social influence can also stimulate demand. To continue the research in the future, longitudinal research may be applied to monitor the development of the intentions of consumers with time and in particular with the increasing markets of organic foods. Also, moderating variables (e.g. price sensitivity or cultural attitudes) could be tested, whereas cross-country comparisons may provide more insights into the extent that these findings are universal.

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