

Consumers' Concerns as Antecedents of Organic Food Purchase Intentions in India

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Abstract

This study explores the determinants shaping customers' intentions to purchase organic food in India, focusing on food safety concerns, nutritional concerns, and health concerns. Data were collected through an online survey distributed via social media and email, yielding 124 valid responses from an initial 150. An independent t-test was employed to examine gender-based differences, while Pearson's correlation was used to analyze the relationships among variables. The findings reveal that purchase intention is positively and significantly associated with food safety, nutritional, and health concerns, underscoring their critical role in influencing consumer behavior. Interestingly, no substantial gender differences emerged, suggesting that both males and females display similar purchase intentions toward organic

foods. These insights highlight the growing consumer orientation toward health-conscious and safe food choices, providing valuable implications for marketers, policymakers, and stakeholders seeking to promote sustainable consumption and strengthen the organic food market in India.

Keywords: Organic Food, Food Safety Concern, Nutrition Concern, Health Concern, Purchase Intention

1. Introduction

Globally, the growing interest in organic food consumption has been propelled by heightened consumer awareness of personal wellness, environmental sustainability, and food safety. Consumers are increasingly drawn toward products that are perceived as natural and free from synthetic chemicals, pesticides, and additives commonly linked with conventional farming practices (Shamsi & Abad, 2024). This paradigm shift underscores the need to understand the complex factors that influence consumer intentions to purchase organic food, as these preferences extend beyond individual health to encompass broader concerns about ecological balance and sustainable food systems (Rana & Paul, 2017).

In this context, three key drivers, food safety concerns, nutritional considerations, and health benefits, emerge as central to consumer decision-making. Previous studies have highlighted how perceptions of food safety and the avoidance of chemical residues strongly shape consumer trust in organic products (Shaharudin et al., 2010). Similarly, nutritional value and the belief that organic foods are richer in essential nutrients influence purchasing decisions, particularly among health-conscious consumers (Jakubowska et al., 2024). Perceived health benefits, including long-term well-being and disease prevention, further reinforce consumer motivation to invest in organic alternatives. These interrelated concerns form a critical framework for understanding how consumers evaluate organic food and make purchase decisions.

The significance of this investigation is twofold. From a business perspective, identifying the primary concerns influencing organic food purchase intention can help producers and retailers tailor their marketing strategies to align with consumer expectations. From a policy standpoint, understanding these drivers offers guidance for designing interventions that promote healthier and more sustainable dietary patterns (Bazhan et al., 2024). Given the rising demand for organic products, stakeholders must recognize that consumer motivations often stem from both personal health philosophies and a collective environmental consciousness (Li & Jaharuddin, 2020).

Despite the growing body of literature on organic food consumption, there remains a noticeable research gap concerning how these consumer concerns influence purchase intention in the Indian context. India presents a unique case as it is both a leading producer of organic food and a rapidly growing market where urban consumers are becoming increasingly health-conscious. Yet, empirical studies exploring the interplay of food safety, nutrition, and health concerns in shaping purchase intentions remain limited.

Accordingly, this study pursues two primary objectives. First, it seeks to investigate the relationships between food safety, nutritional, and health concerns, and consumers' intentions to purchase organic food. Second, it examines whether significant gender differences exist in purchase intentions, thereby offering a nuanced understanding of consumer behavior in India's organic food sector. By addressing these objectives, the study contributes to the broader literature by integrating health, nutrition, and safety perspectives into a cohesive analysis of consumer decision-making, while also offering practical implications for marketers, policymakers, and producers in fostering sustainable food consumption.

2. Literature Review

This section examines prior research on organic food consumption. It seeks to identify the various factors that influence consumer behavior in the case of organic food. It examines

consumer concerns and how they relate to the purchase intention of organic food. The prime concerns identified from the previous studies are food safety, nutritional, and health concerns.

2.1 Organic Products

Organic items are produced utilizing ecologically friendly techniques and agricultural practices that consider the final product's quality and the production processes (Chinnici et al., 2002). India's agricultural production increased dramatically during the green revolution. The technologies used during the green revolution's inception, aided by policies and further propelled by agrochemicals, machinery, and irrigation, were the primary driving forces behind increased agricultural production and productivity (Roychowdhury et al., 2013). As public knowledge of health, food safety, and environmental problems has grown, so has the demand for eco-friendly goods such as organic foods (Kumar & Ali, 2011). Compared to their conventional counterparts, organic producers face the crucial issue that organic products must be labelled to indicate their organic origin (Michelsen et al., 1999). Organic products can be of different types, like organic cosmetics, supplements, organic foods, organic clothing, etc.

2.2 Organic Foods

Organic foods are “grown or processed without pesticides, mineral fertilizers, or other chemicals” (Singh & Verma, 2017). Various adjectives, including "natural," "local," "fresh," “green” and "pure," have been used to characterize organic food in the past (Rana & Paul, 2017). India has the following categories of organic foods:

- Organic fruits and vegetables
- Organic Cereal and Food grains
- Organic Meat, Poultry and Dairy
- Organic Spices and Pulses
- Organic Processed food

- Organic Beverages

2.3 Food Safety Concerns

Food safety has emerged as a paramount concern for consumers and is consistently identified as a major driver of organic food purchases (Kushwah et al., 2019). This concern largely stems from the perception that organic farming practices, which prohibit synthetic pesticides, herbicides, and genetically modified organisms, produce foods with a lower risk of chemical contamination (Cao et al., 2023). Conventional farming's reliance on chemical inputs is often associated with potential long-term health risks, encouraging consumers to view organic food as a safer alternative (Rana & Paul, 2017). The appeal of safety and purity aligns with a broader consumer shift toward healthier and more sustainable dietary choices (Pereira et al., 2022).

This concern is further reinforced by rising reports of foodborne illnesses and contamination in conventional products, which strengthen consumer trust in organic food as a safer option. Additionally, the spread of food-related diseases such as Avian Influenza has heightened awareness of the importance of safe food consumption, prompting governments and health agencies to emphasize food safety (Rana & Paul, 2017). As a result, organic food, produced under stricter regulations and free from synthetic chemicals, is increasingly perceived as a secure dietary option (Nichifor et al., 2025), significantly shaping consumer purchase intentions (Rana & Paul, 2017). Consequently, this hypothesis is proposed:

H1: Food safety concerns positively impact the purchase intention towards organic food.

2.4 Nutritional Concerns

Beyond food safety, the perception of nutritional superiority plays a central role in motivating organic food purchases. Consumers widely believe that organic products contain higher levels of vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants compared to conventional alternatives, even though scientific evidence remains mixed (Shaharudin et al., 2010). Despite the lack of

definitive proof, this perception strongly influences consumer expectations and willingness to pay a premium for organic foods (Wijesinghe & Nazreen, 2020). The belief is often linked to the notion that organic farming practices, emphasizing soil health, biodiversity, and natural growth processes, result in more nutrient-rich products. Consequently, nutritional considerations are closely tied to purchase intentions, as consumers view organic foods as providers of enhanced health benefits (Kushwah et al., 2019).

Moreover, the absence of synthetic pesticides and fertilizers in organic cultivation reinforces the perception of organic food as purer and more natural, further strengthening assumptions of superior nutritional quality (Sulaiman et al., 2020). This focus on intrinsic health benefits highlights nutrition as a pivotal factor in consumer adoption of organic products. Growing demand for functional foods and preventive health strategies has positioned organic options as attractive choices (Shepherd et al., 2005), transforming them from a niche market into a significant segment of the global food industry (Aslam et al., 2020). Therefore, this hypothesis is proposed:

H2: Nutritional concerns positively impact the purchase intention towards organic food.

2.5 Health Concerns

A substantial proportion of consumers purchase organic food primarily due to overarching health concerns, which extend beyond narrow issues of nutrition or food safety. Many people view organic foods as integral to a healthier lifestyle and as a means of preventing disease (Rana & Paul, 2017). Concerns often center on the potential long-term effects of pesticide residues, genetically modified organisms, and artificial additives in conventional foods. This reflects a growing preference for natural, minimally processed foods that align with a preventative health paradigm aimed at reducing chronic disease risks and enhancing overall vitality (Kushwah et al., 2019). Increasing awareness of the diet–health connection has

encouraged consumers to adopt organic foods as a proactive measure to safeguard well-being and improve quality of life (Rana & Paul, 2017).

This health-oriented motivation underscores the strong link between food choices and personal well-being, reflecting a broader societal shift toward health-conscious consumerism (Suvittawat & Suvittawat, 2024). Research consistently demonstrates that consumers perceive organic products as safer and healthier compared to conventional alternatives. These beliefs also extend to avoiding artificial hormones and antibiotics in meat and dairy, reinforcing organic food's appeal (Shaharudin et al., 2010). Ultimately, health consciousness consistently emerges as the most influential driver of organic food consumption (Vehapi & Mitić, 2021). Hence, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H3: Health concerns positively impact purchase intention towards organic foods.

2.6 Purchase Intention

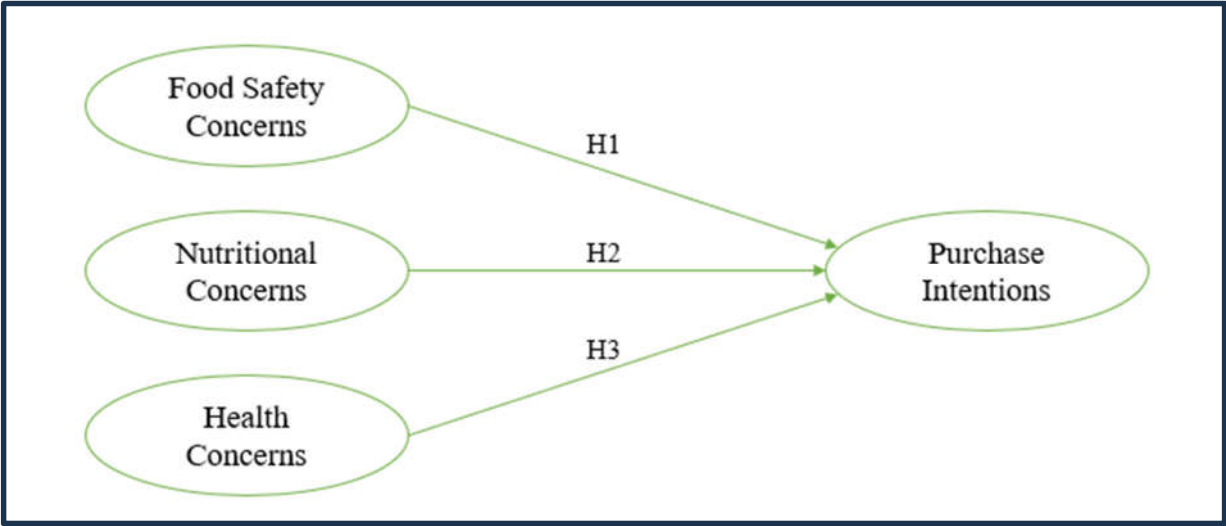
The intention to purchase organic food can be defined as the likelihood that a consumer will choose to buy organic products. This decision is influenced by a combination of health, environmental, and ethical considerations (Shamsi & Abad, 2024). Purchase intention is a key factor that precedes actual buying behavior and is shaped by several elements, including perceived product benefits, consumer attitudes, and socio-cultural norms (Li & Jaharuddin, 2020).

Previous research, heavily guided by the Theory of Reasoned Action, has shown a direct relationship between a consumer's intention and their subsequent behavior, with various factors influencing this connection (Shaharudin et al., 2010). This understanding is consistent with the Theory of Planned Behavior, which suggests that behavioral intention is determined by attitudes toward the behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control (Le & Nguyen, 2022). Numerous studies have effectively applied this model to predict consumer

intentions in various contexts, including the organic food market, demonstrating its relevance even with cultural variations in the influence of different factors (Bazhan et al., 2024).

Based on the hypotheses proposed in this section, a conceptual model is presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Conceptual Model



Source: Researcher’s Work

3. Research Methodology

The present exploratory study employed convenience sampling to collect responses from participants across various Indian cities. Data were gathered using a structured questionnaire consisting of 31 items, which was administered online. Respondents were invited through social media platforms and personal emails. A total of 150 questionnaires were received, of which 124 were deemed usable for analysis. Among the respondents, 51.6% were female and 48.4% were male, ensuring a fairly balanced gender representation.

The data analysis was conducted using SPSS version 23. An independent sample t-test was applied to examine significant differences between the independent and dependent variables. To assess the associations, Pearson’s correlation test was used, focusing on food safety concern, nutritional concern, and health concern as independent variables and purchase intention as the dependent variable. Finally, regression analysis was carried out to test the

proposed hypotheses and identify the strength of relationships among the variables.

4. Data Analysis and Result

Pearson's Correlation was measured to determine the relationship between each independent variable and purchase intention toward organic foods. Table 1 shows that food safety concern positively correlates with the purchase intention of organic foods ($r = .548$). Subsequently, Natural Content ($r = .651$), Nutritional Concern ($r = .681$), and health concern ($r = .580$) are positively correlated with purchase intention significantly at the 0.01 level. Table 1 presents the correlation results of food safety concern, nutritional concern, and health concern.

Table 1: Correlation of Independent Variables with Purchase Intention (PI)

Variables	1	2	3
1. Food Safety Concern	0.548*		
2. Nutritional Concern		0.681*	
3. Health Consciousness			0.580*

Significance level= *Correlation is significant at 0.01 level (2 tailed)

Additionally, group statistics and the independent t-test result for the gender difference were also explored in organic food purchase intention. Results are shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Group Statistics and Independent t-Test

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	T	Df	Sig. (2- tailed)
	Female	38	3.7053	.66208	.105	71	.916
PI*	Male	36	3.6857	.91173			

*PI-Purchase Intention

As the significance level is (0.916) $P > 0.05$, the two groups (Male and Female) do not vary substantially in their purchase intention of organic food.

Organic food provides nearly the same level of satisfaction to both males and females because it is made in a safe environment and considers consumers' health, not their gender. Their purchase can vary according to consumers' needs and probability, but is different from other products like luxury cars or bikes, which excite men, or cosmetics, which attract female consumers more towards them. So, as food is typical for males and females, its purchase is not affected by gender. Still, it may differ in the case of other demographic variables like age, education level, and income level. Young people are very attracted to organic food; consumers who are more educated and have excellent knowledge of organic foods will positively respond to it, and consumers whose incomes are higher will purchase more than those whose incomes fall in the lower income group.

A simple regression analysis was performed to test the proposed hypothesis. In the Indian context, the regression model predicts the impact of food safety, natural content, nutritional concerns, health awareness, attitude, and religion on the purchase intention of organic food. In Table 3, the R2 value is 0.300, which means that around 30% of the variance in the dependent variable (Purchase Intention) is explained by food safety concerns at a p-value of 0.000($p<0.05$) significance level. Thus, **H1 is supported.**

Table 3: Coefficient Regression of Food Safety Concerns

Dependent Variable	Independent Variable	Standard Coefficient (beta)	R ²	Sig.
Purchase Intention	Food Safety Concern	0.548	0.300	0.000

In Table 4, the R² value is 0.464, which means that around 46.4% of the variance in the dependent variable (Purchase Intention) is explained by nutritional concern at a p-value of 0.000 ($p < 0.05$) significance level. Thus, **H2 is supported**.

Table 4: Coefficient Regression of Nutritional Concerns

Dependent Variable	Independent Variable	Standard coefficient (beta)	R ²	Sig.
Purchase Intention	Nutritional Concern	0.681	0.464	0.000

In Table 5, the R² value is 0.336, which means that around 33.6% of the variance in the dependent variable (Purchase Intention) is explained by health consciousness at a p-value of 0.000 ($p < 0.05$) significance level. Thus, **H3 is supported**.

Table 5: Coefficient Regression of Health Concerns

Dependent Variable	Independent Variable	Standard Coefficient (beta)	R ²	Sig.
Purchase Intention	Health Consciousness	0.580	0.336	0.000

From the regression Analysis, we can see that variance in purchase intention is highly explained by nutritional concern (46.4%). Around 33.6% variance of purchase, the intention is explained by health concerns; it is relatively low compared to nutritional concern because health consciousness is related to consumers' health; conscious consumers are more inclined towards organic food than those who are not that conscious about their health.

5. Relationship Between Independent Variables and Purchase Intentions

Since all the hypotheses proposed were supported, therefore, the following inferences may be drawn from data analysis:

- *Food safety concerns* have a strong relationship with purchase intention, showing that Indian consumers are very concerned about the safety of the food they consume. Thus, food safety influences Indian consumers' purchase intentions for organic foods. Organic foods are also conformed to FSSAI (Food Safety and Standard Authority of India), a food safety certificate circulated by the food authority in India.
- *Nutritional concerns* have a strong relationship with purchase intention. It shows that consumers are very much anxious about the nutrition level of their food. Organic foods have higher nutrients than conventionally cultivated foods; hence nutritional concern increases organic food purchasing intention in India. Consumers perceive that organic food has high nutritional values needed to maintain good health. For Example, citrus fruits and berries are powerhouse fruits with high nutrients and low calories.
- *Health concerns* have a strong relationship with purchase intention, indicating that people are very concerned about their health and want to live a healthy lifestyle by consuming organic foods, which are considered healthier than conventional foods. Thus, health consciousness influences the purchase intention of organic foods. For Example, Certain foods, like green leafy vegetables, are very healthy to consume as they contain rich amounts of vitamins A, K, E, and C and have high mineral contents.

From the above results, nutritional concern is a decisive factor influencing organic food purchase intentions, as consumers are very concerned about the nutritional value of their food; they do not want any additives in their food, and hence, play an influential role in influencing consumers' organic food purchase intentions. Health concern is the most critical factor that increases organic food consumption because organic foods are supposed to support

health and nutrition. Food safety is crucial in attracting consumers to organic food because organic foods are considered comparatively safer than conventional foods.

6. Discussion

The following discussion synthesizes the findings concerning the influence of food safety, nutritional, and health concerns on organic food purchase intentions, all of which were found to be statistically significant drivers. Specifically, food safety concerns emerged as a foundational motivator, as consumers increasingly seek to avoid perceived risks associated with conventional farming practices, such as pesticide residues and antibiotic use (Khanal, 2020). This highlights a pervasive desire among consumers for products free from artificial contaminants and genetically modified organisms, aligning with a broader trend towards cleaner eating and natural food consumption. This inclination toward safer food options is further bolstered by a growing mistrust in conventional food production, prompting consumers to proactively choose organic alternatives for perceived peace of mind (Shamsi & Abad, 2024). This heightened awareness of food safety issues, often amplified by media reports and public discourse, compels consumers to prioritize organic food as a means of mitigating potential health risks (Ghazanfari et al., 2024). Beyond safety, nutritional concerns also significantly shaped purchase intentions, as consumers perceived organic foods to possess superior nutritional profiles compared to their conventionally grown counterparts. This perception often stems from beliefs that organic farming practices, such as enriched soil and natural cultivation methods, lead to higher concentrations of vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants. This pursuit of optimal nutrition extends to a desire for foods perceived as more "natural" and less processed, aligning with a holistic view of well-being. This comprehensive approach to health and nutrition underscores the multifaceted motivations driving consumers towards organic food choices (Hoefkens et al., 2009). Finally, health concerns, encompassing both the avoidance of illness and the promotion of wellness, played a pivotal role, driving

consumers to seek organic products as a preventative measure against chronic diseases and a means to enhance overall vitality. This broad interpretation of health, which includes both prophylactic measures and the active pursuit of improved well-being, consistently drives consumers toward organic food selections, regardless of the higher cost (van Doorn & Verhoef, 2011). This holistic view of health, encompassing both immediate safety and long-term well-being, consistently drives consumers toward organic food selections, regardless of the higher cost (Khanal, 2020).

7. Limitations and Future Research

The findings of this study indicate that, although the consumption of organic foods has been prevalent for a long time, further research is needed to identify the factors that influence customers' willingness to purchase organic products. Additionally, the data collected was based on convenience sampling and may not accurately represent the target population. To improve the representativeness of the sample, information could be gathered from selected food outlets where customers have already had experience with organic food. Increasing the sample size using a more effective sampling technique would enhance the reliability of the findings

8. Implications

Producers and marketers of organic food in India should emphasize the nutritional value and natural ingredients of their products, as these are vital to consumers. Transparency can be maintained by printing this information on the packaging. Food safety is also a critical concern, and marketers must ensure compliance with standards set by the National Programme for Organic Production (NPOP) and the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI). Additionally, subtle religious influences could guide consumers towards healthier choices through campaigns. To boost organic food sales, the Indian government and marketers should support producers with technology and brand development to lower costs

and risks. Lastly, improving the organic food supervision system and promoting the benefits of organic produce can help align supply with increasing consumer demand.e.

9. Conclusion

This research evaluates the factors affecting the intention to purchase organic food in India and finds no significant differences between male and female consumers in their buying intentions. This could be attributed to both genders being equally health-conscious today. The findings reveal that independent variables such as food safety concerns, nutritional concerns, and health concerns all significantly influence the intention to purchase organic food. Additionally, the results indicate that the desire to buy organic products is strongly affected by considerations of nutrition and health awareness. This may be because nutritional value is a key attribute of organic food, while health concerns tend to be more of a psychological factor for individual consumers.

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