

Goal-Driven Organic Food Consumption in Himalayan Tourism: The Role of Trust and Implications for Sustainable Tourism Policy

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ABSTRACT

Grounded in the Theory of Reasoned Goal Pursuit (TRGP), this study examines tourists' intentions toward regional organic food in the Northern Himalayan region of India, an ecologically sensitive tourism context. Extending TRGP, trust is conceptualized as both a mediating mechanism between goal-driven motivations and behavioral outcomes, and a moderator of the motivation–intention relationship under conditions of uncertainty. Data from 560 domestic tourists were analyzed using covariance-based structural equation modelling and moderated mediation. The findings indicate that active procurement and approval goals significantly enhance purchase motivation, which strongly predicts intention, while perceived behavioral control influences motivation independently of trust. Trust partially mediates goal–motivation relationships and strengthens the conversion of motivation into intention. The study advances TRGP by introducing a goal-validation mechanism and offers policy-relevant insights by emphasizing the role of certification systems, trust-building measures, and governance frameworks in promoting sustainable food consumption in tourism destinations.....

Keywords: Organic food consumption, tourism policy, sustainable tourism, trust, theory of reasoned goal pursuit, Himalayan tourism.

INTRODUCTION

Food consumption has emerged as a central dimension of sustainable tourism, particularly in ecologically sensitive regions where tourist behavior directly affects environmental integrity and local livelihoods. The increasing demand for organic and regionally sourced food reflects a broader shift toward health consciousness, environmental responsibility, and authenticity-oriented consumption (Agarwal et al., 2025). Despite this growing interest, limited attention has been given to how tourism policy and regulatory mechanisms can promote responsible food consumption, especially in fragile destinations where product authenticity and sustainability claims are difficult to verify.

The Northern Himalayan region of India provides a compelling context for examining these issues. While tourism growth has generated economic opportunities, it has also intensified environmental pressures, including biodiversity loss, waste generation, and resource depletion (Baloch et al., 2023; NITI Aayog, 2019). In response, policy initiatives have increasingly emphasized

sustainable tourism development and the integration of local food systems into destination planning. However, the effectiveness of such policy efforts depends on understanding the behavioral drivers that influence tourists' consumption choices, particularly in contexts characterized by information asymmetry and uncertainty regarding product authenticity.

Existing research on sustainable consumption has largely relied on the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), the Norm Activation Model (NAM), and Value–Belief–Norm (VBN) theory (Concari et al., 2023; Li and Shan, 2025). While these frameworks provide valuable insights into pro-environmental behavior, they often conceptualize intention as a relatively static outcome of beliefs, offering limited explanation of how individuals actively pursue multiple goals in dynamic tourism settings. This limitation is particularly relevant in unfamiliar destinations, where tourists simultaneously seek personal benefits, social approval, and environmentally responsible experiences.

To address this gap, the present study adopts the Theory of Reasoned Goal Pursuit (TRGP) (Ajzen and Kruglanski, 2019), which conceptualizes behavior as a goal-directed

process driven by active procurement and approval goals. Unlike TPB, TRGP captures the dynamic and motivational nature of decision-making (Hamilton, 2024), making it particularly suitable for tourism contexts characterized by experiential consumption and uncertainty. However, in such settings, tourists often face a goal-means validation problem, where they are unable to determine whether a behavior reliably leads to desired outcomes, especially when product attributes such as “organic” cannot be directly verified.

Within this context, trust becomes a critical mechanism that enables individuals to evaluate the credibility of available options. This study conceptualizes trust as both a mediator that strengthens the translation of goals into motivation and a moderator that enhances the conversion of motivation into intention. By incorporating Trust towards Regional organic food (TOF) into the TRGP framework, the study provides a process-based explanation of how tourists validate and enact sustainable consumption choices under uncertainty (Amin and Tarun, 2021; Watanabe et al., 2020).

This research contributes in two important ways. First, it extends TRGP by introducing trust as a goal-validation mechanism in high-uncertainty tourism contexts. Second, it offers policy-relevant insights by demonstrating how trust-building measures, certification systems, and governance frameworks can support sustainable food consumption in ecologically sensitive destinations. By linking micro-level behavioral processes with macro-level policy considerations, the study provides a foundation for designing more effective tourism policies that promote responsible consumption and destination sustainability.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Underpinning Theory

The TPB has been widely applied to explain consumer intentions in sustainable consumption and tourism contexts (Li and Shan, 2025). It posits that intention is shaped by attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control. However, TPB conceptualizes intention largely as a static outcome of beliefs, offering limited insight into the dynamic and goal-directed nature of decision-making in tourism settings. This limitation is particularly relevant in unfamiliar destinations, where tourists simultaneously pursue personal, social, and environmental goals.

To address this limitation, Ajzen and Kruglanski (2019) proposed the Theory of Reasoned Goal Pursuit (TRGP), which conceptualizes behavior as a goal-driven process. TRGP introduces active goals and motivation as central mechanisms linking cognition and behavior, making it more suitable for tourism contexts characterized by experiential consumption and uncertainty. While emerging studies support the applicability of TRGP in environmental behavior (Concari et al., 2023; Luong, 2025), limited attention has been given to how such goal-driven processes can inform tourism policy, particularly in designing mechanisms that promote sustainable consumption in uncertain destination environments.

2.2. Active Goals and Motivation

Within TRGP, behavior is driven by the pursuit of active goals that individuals perceive as attainable through specific actions. Active procurement goals (APG) reflect personal benefits such as health, quality, and experiential value, while active approval goals (AAG) capture the desire for social recognition and acceptance (Ajzen and Kruglanski, 2019). These goals energize motivation when individuals perceive that a behavior can effectively achieve desired outcomes.

In tourism contexts, organic food consumption is often associated with perceived quality, authenticity, and environmental responsibility, which strengthen procurement-driven motivation (Cavite et al., 2022; Ray et al., 2024). Similarly, social approval motives may influence tourists to adopt sustainable consumption practices that signal responsible behavior and enhance social identity (Shin et al., 2019; Javed et al., 2025). Empirical evidence suggests that both procurement and approval goals can significantly shape motivation toward pro-environmental actions (Concari et al., 2023; Luong, 2025).

From a policy perspective, these goal-driven motivations highlight the importance of designing tourism systems that reinforce perceptions of quality, authenticity, and sustainability through institutional mechanisms such as certification, labeling, and destination branding. Accordingly, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H1: APG positively influence OPM toward local organic food in tourist destinations of the Northern Himalayas.

H2: AAG positively influence OPM in tourist destinations of the Northern Himalayas.

2.3. Perceived Behavioral Control

Perceived behavioral control (PBC) reflects an individual's assessment of the ease or difficulty of performing a behavior (Ajzen and Kruglanski, 2019; Tariyal and Chamoli, 2025). In tourism contexts, PBC captures tourists' perceived ability to access, identify, and purchase organic food while traveling. When individuals perceive higher levels of control, their motivation to engage in the behavior increases.

Previous research indicates that accessibility, affordability, and availability are critical determinants of sustainable consumption behavior (Khan et al., 2023; Madureira et al., 2025). Unlike goal-driven pathways, PBC represents a resource-based feasibility mechanism that operates independently of goal validation processes. This suggests that policy interventions aimed at improving availability, infrastructure, and visibility of organic food can directly enhance tourists' perceived control and motivation. Accordingly:

H3: PBC positively influences OPM in tourist destinations of Northern Himalayas.

2.4. Motivation and Purchase Intention

Motivation serves as the immediate antecedent of behavioral intention within goal-driven frameworks (Ajzen and Kruglanski, 2019). In tourism, motivated individuals are more likely to engage in sustainable practices, including organic food consumption (Buhalis et al., 2023; Ribeiro et al., 2023). Empirical studies

consistently demonstrate a positive relationship between motivation and pro-environmental behavioral intentions (Liu and Yang, 2022; Jakubowska et al., 2024).

In the context of organic food consumption, motivations related to health, environmental responsibility, and experiential value significantly influence purchase intentions (Hu et al., 2024; Tandon et al., 2020). From a policy perspective, strengthening these motivational drivers through destination-level strategies can enhance sustainable consumption outcomes. Thus:

H7: OPM positively influence OPI in tourist destinations of Northern Himalayas.

2.5. Trust Role in Goal Pursuit

Trust plays a critical role in consumer decision-making, particularly in contexts where product attributes are not easily verifiable (Roh et al., 2022; Murphy et al., 2022). In tourism settings, uncertainty regarding the authenticity of organic food is amplified due to limited information about local supply chains. As a result, tourists rely on trust to evaluate whether organic food can fulfill their desired goals.

Importantly, trust is not only a psychological construct but also a policy-mediated outcome shaped by certification systems, regulatory oversight, and institutional credibility. In the context of organic food, trust is often constructed through formal mechanisms such as certification labels, quality standards, and governance frameworks that validate product authenticity (Amin and Tarun, 2021; Watanabe et al., 2020).

2.5.1. Trust as Mediator

Within the TRGP framework, active goals influence motivation through a validation process in which individuals assess whether a behavior is a credible means of achieving desired outcomes. Trust facilitates this process by reducing uncertainty and strengthening perceived credibility. Empirical evidence suggests that

trust mediates the relationship between psychological drivers and sustainable consumption behavior (Ayyub et al., 2021; Roh et al., 2022). From a policy perspective, this highlights the importance of certification systems and regulatory mechanisms in reinforcing consumer confidence. Accordingly:

H4: TOF mediates the relationship between tourists' APG and OPM.

H5: TOF mediates the relationship between tourists' AAG and OPM.

H6: TOF mediates the relationship between tourists' PBC and OPM.

2.5.2. Trust as Moderator

Trust is also expected to strengthen the relationship between motivation and intention by enhancing decision confidence. When tourists trust the authenticity and quality of organic food, they are more likely to translate motivation into actual purchase intention. Conversely, low trust may weaken this relationship despite high motivation.

From a policy perspective, transparent governance structures and credible certification systems can amplify the effectiveness of motivational drivers in shaping behavior. Prior research supports the moderating role of trust in sustainable consumption contexts (Amin and Tarun, 2021; Watanabe et al., 2020). Thus:

H8: TOF moderates the relationship between tourists' OPM and OPI.

Based on the reviewed literature and hypotheses, Figure 1 presents the proposed conceptual framework of the study.

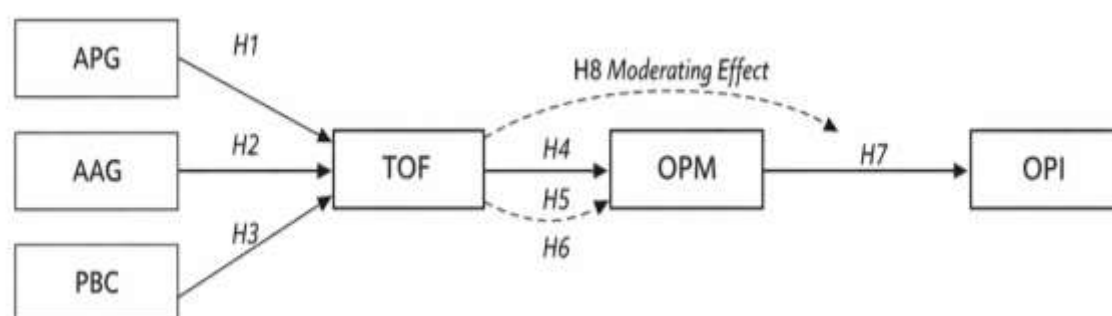


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of Goal-Driven Organic Food Consumption

Methodology

3.1. Measurement of Variables

All measurement items were adapted from established scales and contextualized to assess tourists' organic food consumption in Northern Himalayan destinations. Responses were recorded on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Active Procurement Goals (APG) and Active Approval

Goals (AAG) were measured using six-item scales adapted from Luong (2025). Perceived Behavioral Control (PBC; 3 items) and Organic Purchase Intention (OPI; 4 items) were adopted from Yazdanpanah and Forouzani (2015). Organic Purchase Motivation (OPM; 3 items) was measured using Islam et al. (2024), while Trust in Organic Food (TOF; 4 items) was adapted from Amin and Tarun (2021) and Watanabe et al. (2020).

A pilot study with 50 respondents was conducted to ensure clarity and validity. The pilot sample size of 50 aligns with established methodological guidelines, which recommend a sample approximately 10% the size of the target population for such preliminary tests (Connelly, 2008). Items with factor loadings below 0.70 were removed, resulting in a final instrument of 22 items used for structural analysis. The complete inventory of final measurement items is provided in Appendix 1.

3.2. Sampling and Data Collection

A purposive sampling approach was employed to target tourists with prior experience of consuming organic food during travel. Snowball sampling was used to extend respondent reach. Both non-probability sampling techniques are well-documented in hospitality and tourism literature, facilitating access to a varied and pertinent respondent pool (Sarmiento and Ramos, 2022).

The study was conducted across six popular tourist destinations in the Northern Himalayan region of India—Nainital, Rishikesh, Shimla, Manali, Gulmarg, and Ladakh. These destinations were selected for their natural beauty, cultural diversity, and growing reputation for organic produce that attracts environmentally conscious

travelers (Barbhuiya, 2021; Chandel & Sharma, 2024; Jaiswal, 2024; Lone et al., 2023). Examining visitors to these locations provides meaningful insights into how travelers perceive and choose organic food in an emerging-market context. This geographical diversity also strengthens the empirical representativeness of the findings, reflecting both pilgrimage and leisure-based tourism segments.

The data were collected over three months (April–June 2025) through a structured online questionnaire distributed via digital platforms. After screening and data cleaning, 560 valid responses were retained for analysis. The sample size satisfies recommended thresholds for covariance-based structural equation modeling (CB-SEM) (Hair et al., 2019).

3.3. Demographic Characteristics of Travelers

The sample comprised a diverse group of tourists in terms of gender, age, education, and income. A higher proportion of respondents were female and middle-aged, consistent with prior research indicating stronger engagement with health-conscious and sustainable consumption practices among these groups. Detailed demographic characteristics are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Travelers' Profile (n=560)

Category	Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	240	42.86
	Female	320	57.14
Age	18–30 years	80	14.29
	31–45 years	150	26.79
	46–59 years	200	35.71
	Above 60 years	130	23.21
Topography	Domestic (Indian tourists)	420	75.00
	Global (International)	140	25.00
Marital Status	Married	300	53.57
	Unmarried	230	41.07
	Others	30	5.36
Education	High School	40	7.14
	Bachelor	260	46.43
	Master's	180	32.14
	Doctorate	30	5.36
	Others	50	8.93
Monthly Income	Below ₹25000	70	12.50
	₹25000–50000	90	16.07
	₹50001–75000	110	19.64
	₹75001–100000	140	25.00

	Above ₹100000	150	26.79
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4. Analysis and Results

The analysis followed a structured approach consistent with CB-SEM procedures. The dataset was screened for missing values, normality, and outliers before assessing measurement reliability and validity. An exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted to confirm the dimensional structure of the constructs. Subsequent measurement model assessment involved evaluating composite reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity to confirm the psychometric robustness of the constructs.

After establishing measurement adequacy, the structural model was estimated to examine the proposed direct

relationships (H1–H3 and H7). This was followed by mediation testing (H4–H6), and moderation analysis employing PROCESS Macro Models (Hayes, 2018).

The EFA results supported a six-factor solution, explaining 65.3% of the total variance, consistent with the theoretical model. The retained factors correspond to Active Procurement Goals (APG), Active Approval Goals (AAG), Perceived Behavioral Control (PBC), Organic Purchase Motivation (OPM), Organic Purchase Intention (OPI), and Trust in Organic Food (TOF). Detailed results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA)

Factor	Items Retained	Eigenvalue	% Variance (Factor)	Cumulative %
Active Procurement Goals (APG)	6	4.22	18.1%	18.1%
Active Approval Goals (AAG)	3	3.18	13.6%	31.7%
Perceived Behavioral Control (PBC)	3	2.45	10.5%	42.2%
Organic Purchase Motivation (OPM)	4	2.02	8.6%	50.8%
Organic Purchase Intention (OPI)	3	1.78	7.6%	58.4%
Trust in Regional Organic Food (TOF)	3	1.62	6.9%	65.3%
Total (6 Factors)	22	—	65.3%	—

Note: (Varimax rotation; only primary factor loadings displayed; loadings < .40 suppressed).

4.1. Reliability Assessment

Composite reliability (CR) and Cronbach's alpha values exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.70 for all constructs, indicating strong internal consistency (Beyer et al., 2019)(Table 3). The reliability statistics are reported in Table 3.

Table: 3 Composite reliability / Internal consistency table

Construct	# items	Cronbach's α	Composite Reliability (CR)
Active Procurement Goals (APG)	6	0.88	0.91
Active Approval Goals (AAG)	3	0.82	0.86
Perceived Behavioral Control (PBC)	3	0.79	0.83
Organic Purchase Motivation (OPM)	4	0.85	0.88

Organic Purchase Intention (OPI)	3	0.86	0.89
Trust in Regional Organic Food (TOF)	3	0.84	0.87

4.2. Convergent Validity Evaluation

Convergent validity was assessed to confirm that each measurement item loading significantly demonstrates adequate construct representation. As presented in Table 4, all standardized factor loadings exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.60. Furthermore, the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values for all constructs were above 0.50 (Fornell and Larcker, 1981), thereby confirming satisfactory convergent validity. Composite reliability values also exceeded 0.80 across all constructs, further supporting measurement robustness.

Table: 4 Convergent validities — Item Loadings and AVE

Construct (Cronbach's α)	Items	Loading	CR	AVE
Active Procurement Goals (APG) ($\alpha = 0.88$)	APG1	0.82	0.91	0.57
	APG2	0.80		
	APG3	0.79		
	APG4	0.76		
	APG5	0.74		
	APG6	0.71		
Active Approval Goals (AAG) ($\alpha = 0.82$)	AAG1	0.84	0.86	0.65
	AAG2	0.81		
	AAG3	0.78		
Perceived Behavioral Control (PBC) ($\alpha = 0.79$)	PBC1	0.77	0.83	0.56
	PBC2	0.75		
	PBC3	0.72		
Organic Food Motivation (OPM) ($\alpha = 0.85$)	OPM1	0.86	0.88	0.60
	OPM2	0.81		
	OPM3	0.74		
	OPM4	0.69		
Organic Purchase Intention (OPI) ($\alpha = 0.86$)	OPI1	0.88	0.89	0.68
	OPI2	0.86		
	OPI3	0.79		
Trust in Regional Organic Food (TOF) ($\alpha = 0.84$)	TOF1	0.81	0.87	0.62
	TOF2	0.79		
	TOF3	0.78		

4.3. Discriminant Validity Assessment

To ensure that each construct represented a distinct conceptual domain, discriminant validity was assessed using the heterotrait–monotrait (HTMT) ratio of correlations. As presented in Table 5, all HTMT values were below the conservative threshold of 0.85 recommended by Henseler et al. (2015), thereby confirming satisfactory discriminant validity and indicating adequate empirical distinction among the study constructs.

Table 5: Discriminant Validity — HTMT Matrix

Construct	APG	AAG	PBC	OPM	OPI	TOF
APG	1.00					
AAG	0.48	1.00				
PBC	0.45	0.42	1.00			
OPM	0.52	0.46	0.40	1.00		
OPI	0.49	0.44	0.37	0.57	1.00	
TOF	0.44	0.40	0.36	0.50	0.51	1.00

4.4. Structural Model Estimates (Direct Effects)

The structural model was estimated using covariance-based structural equation modeling (CB-SEM). The structural model results indicate that Active Procurement Goals significantly influence Organic Purchase Motivation ($\beta = 0.36$, $p < .001$), supporting H1. Active Approval Goals ($\beta = 0.24$, $p < .001$) and Perceived Behavioral Control ($\beta = 0.21$, $p < .001$) also demonstrate significant positive effects on motivation, supporting H2 and H3. Furthermore, Organic Purchase Motivation significantly predicts Organic Purchase Intention ($\beta = 0.29$, $p < .001$), supporting H7 (Table 6).

Table 6: Structural Model — Direct Effects (H1, H2, H3, H7)

Hypotheses	Path	β (Std.)	Supported
H1	APG → OPM	0.36***	YES
H2	AAG → OPM	0.24***	YES
H3	PBC → OPM	0.21***	YES
H7	OPM → OPI	0.29***	YES

4.5. Mediation Analysis (PROCESS Model 4)

To examine whether Trust in Regional Organic Food (TOF) mediates the relationships, Hayes' PROCESS Macro (Model 4) with 5,000 bootstrap resamples was employed (Table 7). The indirect effect of Active Procurement Goals on Organic Food Motivation through TOF was statistically significant (indirect ≈ 0.13), as the bootstrapped confidence interval did not include zero, thereby supporting H4. Given that the direct effect of APG on OPM remained significant ($\beta = 0.36$, $p < .001$), the mediation is characterized as partial. Similarly, TOF significantly mediated the relationship between Active Approval Goals and Organic Food Motivation (indirect ≈ 0.10), supporting H5. As the direct effect of AAG on OPM also remained significant ($\beta = 0.24$, $p < .001$), partial mediation is confirmed. In contrast, the indirect effect of Perceived Behavioral Control on Organic Food Motivation via TOF was not statistically significant, as the path from PBC to TOF was non-significant ($\beta = 0.07$, ns). Consequently, H6 was rejected. The overall structural relationships and mediation effects are illustrated in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Estimated Structural Model

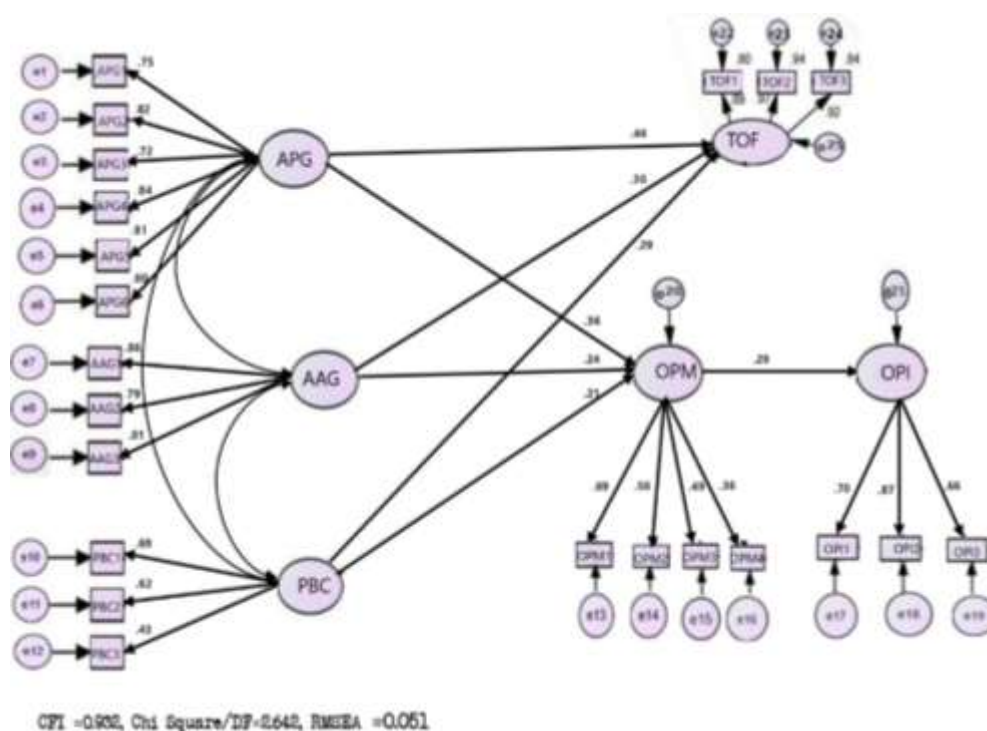


Table 7: Mediation Analysis (PROCESS Model 4; 5,000 bootstrap samples)

Hypothesis	Mediation Path	Path a (Predictor → TOF)	Path b (TOF → OPM)	Direct Effect (c')	Indirect Effect (a × b)	Mediation
H4	APG → TOF → OPM	0.44***	0.29***	0.36***	0.13	Partial
H5	AAG → TOF → OPM	0.36***	0.29***	0.24***	0.10	Partial
H6	PBC → TOF → OPM	0.07 (ns)	0.29***	0.21***	0.02	Rejected

4.6. Moderation Analysis

A moderation analysis was conducted using Hayes' PROCESS Macro (Model 1) with 5,000 bootstrap resamples. Both the predictor (OPM) and moderator (TOF) were mean-centred to reduce multicollinearity and facilitate interpretation of the interaction effect. As presented in Table 8, the interaction term (OPM × TOF) was positive and statistically significant ($B = 0.09$, $p = .002$, 95% CI [0.03, 0.15]), indicating that trust strengthens the relationship between outcome motivation and purchase intention (H8). The positive interaction effect suggests that higher levels of trust strengthen the relationship between motivation and purchase intention.

Table 8 — Moderation Analysis (PROCESS Model 1): OPM × TOF → OPI

Term	B	SE	t	p	LLC I	ULC I
Constant	0.98	0.12	8.17	< .001	0.75	1.21
OPM (predictor)	0.55	0.05	11.00	< .001	0.45	0.65
TOF (moderator)	0.20	0.05	4.00	< .001	0.10	0.30
OPM × TOF (interaction)	0.09	0.03	3.00	0.002	0.03	0.15

Bootstrapping = 5,000; predictor and moderator mean-centred

4.7. Conditional Effects of the Moderator

The conditional effects analysis shows that the impact of OPM on OPI increases with higher levels of trust. The relationship is weakest at low trust ($B = 0.40$) and strongest at high trust ($B = 0.70$), confirming the reinforcing role of trust in translating motivation into intention (Table 9, Figure 3).

Table 9: Conditional Effects of OPM on OPI at Values of TOF

TOF Level	Effect of OPM on OPI (B)	SE	t	p	BootLLCI	BootULCI
Low (Mean – 1 SD)	0.40	0.07	5.71	< .001	0.27	0.53
Medium (Mean)	0.55	0.05	11.00	< .001	0.45	0.65
High (Mean + 1 SD)	0.70	0.08	8.75	< .001	0.54	0.86

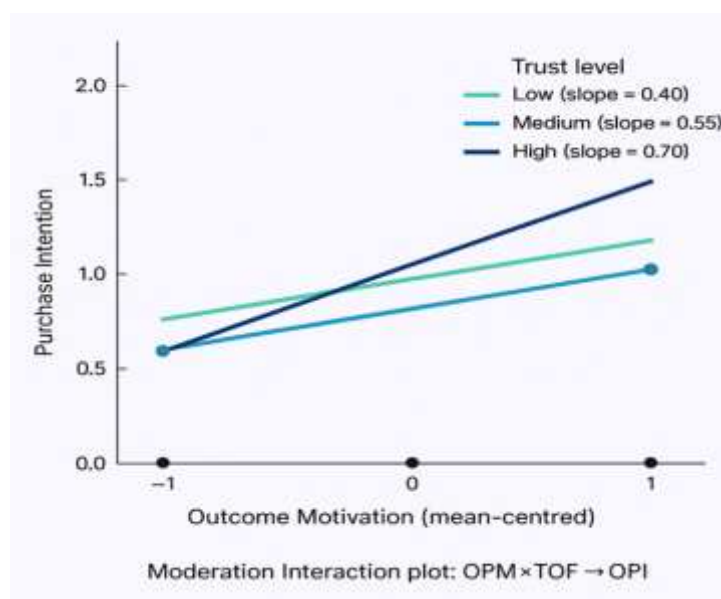


Figure 3: Moderation Interaction Plot — OPM × TOF → OPI

5. Discussion and Conclusion

The findings of this study provide a structured understanding of how goal-driven motivations and trust mechanisms shape tourists' organic food consumption in Himalayan destinations. Active procurement goals emerged as the strongest predictor of motivation, indicating that tourists are primarily influenced by perceived quality, health benefits, and experiential value. Organic food consumption in such contexts therefore reflects a purposeful effort to achieve functional and emotional value associated with authenticity and well-being, consistent with prior research on perceived value in organic food consumption (Watanabe et al., 2020; Ray et al., 2024).

Active approval goals also significantly influenced motivation, highlighting the role of social identity in sustainable consumption behavior. Organic food choices function as visible signals of responsible and environmentally conscious behavior, suggesting that tourists are influenced not only by personal benefits but also by social expectations, aligning with studies

emphasizing social identity in sustainable consumption (Du and Jiang, 2025).

Perceived behavioral control was found to positively influence motivation, indicating that accessibility and ease of purchase remain critical enablers of sustainable consumption (Fisher and Oyserman, 2017). This finding suggests that policy interventions aimed at improving availability, affordability, and visibility of organic food through infrastructure development and local supply chain integration can directly enhance tourist engagement.

Trust plays a central role in shaping behavioral outcomes by both mediating and moderating relationships within the model. The mediation results indicate that trust strengthens the translation of procurement and approval goals into motivation by validating the credibility of organic food offerings (Hu et al., 2021). In contrast, the absence of mediation in the PBC pathway suggests that accessibility operates independently of trust-based evaluations, highlighting the distinct roles of credibility and feasibility in decision-making processes (Hansen et al., 2018).

The moderation findings further demonstrate that trust amplifies the relationship between motivation and purchase intention. Tourists with higher levels of trust are more likely to convert their motivation into actual intention, reinforcing the importance of institutional credibility in uncertain tourism contexts, consistent with prior findings on trust in organic consumption (Amin and Tarun, 2021). From a policy standpoint, this underscores the need for robust certification systems, transparent labeling, and effective governance mechanisms to enhance trust and support sustainable consumption.

Overall, the study advances the Theory of Reasoned Goal Pursuit (Ajzen and Kruglanski, 2019) by introducing trust as a goal-validation mechanism in high-uncertainty tourism environments. More importantly, it contributes to tourism policy by demonstrating how behavioral drivers and institutional mechanisms interact to shape sustainable consumption outcomes. Integrating these insights into tourism policy can support the development of more effective strategies for promoting organic food consumption and enhancing destination sustainability in ecologically fragile regions such as the Himalayas.

6. Implications

The findings of this study offer important implications for tourism policy by demonstrating how goal-driven motivations and trust mechanisms jointly shape tourists' organic food consumption in ecologically sensitive destinations. The significant influence of procurement and approval goals, along with the mediating role of trust, highlights the need for institutional mechanisms that enhance the credibility of organic food systems. Policymakers should prioritize strengthening certification frameworks, ensuring transparency in labeling, and promoting traceability systems that enable tourists to verify product authenticity and quality. Such interventions can reinforce trust and facilitate the translation of goal-driven motivations into sustainable consumption behavior.

The moderating role of trust further indicates that regulatory assurance and governance structures are critical in converting motivation into purchase intention. Tourism authorities should integrate organic food systems into destination-level sustainability strategies by establishing standardized certification protocols, monitoring compliance, and supporting local producers through policy incentives. These measures can improve both consumer confidence and market accessibility, particularly in contexts characterized by information asymmetry.

The findings also show that perceived behavioral control influences motivation independently of trust, suggesting that accessibility-related interventions remain equally important. Policy efforts aimed at improving availability, affordability, and visibility of organic food—through infrastructure development, local supply chain integration, and destination planning—can directly enhance tourists' perceived control and engagement.

From a managerial perspective, destination managers and service providers should align with policy frameworks by emphasizing certification, communicating product

authenticity, and designing consumption environments that highlight quality and sustainability. However, these efforts are most effective when supported by credible governance systems that institutionalize trust.

From a theoretical standpoint, the study extends the Theory of Reasoned Goal Pursuit by demonstrating that trust operates both as a goal-validation mechanism and as a boundary condition in high-uncertainty tourism contexts. This highlights the importance of integrating behavioral and institutional perspectives to better understand sustainable consumption in tourism settings.

7. Limitations

This study has several limitations that provide directions for future research. First, the use of a cross-sectional design and non-probability sampling may limit the generalizability of the findings. Future research may adopt longitudinal and probability-based approaches to improve robustness. Second, the study is confined to the Northern Himalayan region, and the findings may not be directly applicable to other tourism contexts with different environmental or institutional conditions.

Third, the model focuses on motivation and trust within the Theory of Reasoned Goal Pursuit and does not incorporate broader psychological constructs such as moral norms or intrinsic motivation, which may further influence sustainable consumption. Finally, the study does not include institutional or policy-level variables, such as regulatory frameworks or certification effectiveness, which may shape trust and behavior. Future research should integrate these factors to better understand the interaction between behavioral processes and tourism policy.

Declaration

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