

Influence of Consumer Attitude and Subjective Norms On Purchase Intention Towards Organic Food Products: A Study in Punjab

Harmandeep Kaur<sup>1</sup>, Dr. Raminder Pal Singh<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Research Scholar, Department of Applied Sciences and Humanities, Shaheed Bhagat Singh State University, Ferozepur, Punjab, India

<sup>2</sup>Professor, Department of School of Business and Commerce Studies, Shaheed Bhagat Singh State University, Ferozepur, Punjab, India

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<b>KEYWORDS</b> <i>Theory of reasoned action, Organic food products, purchase intention, consumer attitude, subjective norms.</i>	<b>ABSTRACT</b> In recent years, consumers have become aware of the harmful effects of chemicals in food. People are willing to consume food that is not harmful to their health and find organic foods to be a good alternative. Besides being good for health, organic food is good for the environment as well. Therefore, organic food has economic and social benefits. The intention of consumer to purchase organic foods has been an interesting study area and number of researchers has conducted numerous studies in understanding what influences people to purchase organic food products. However, results of these study were contradictory. Hence, this research study was conducted to overcome this research gap. The current study analyses the purchase intentions of consumers about the consumption of organic food using the TRA paradigm with a particular focus on consumer attitude and subjective norms. This research has adapted descriptive research in the form of cross-sectional design. The sample of the study comprised 150 consumers. The standardised questionnaire was distributed by means of convenience sampling to individual consumers who intend to buy organic food. Data is analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS). The results of research study showed that consumer attitude and subjective norms towards organic food purchase was positively predicting the consumer purchase intention. Finally, this study concludes with important implications for manufacturers and government.
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1. INTRODUCTION

Over the past few years, organic food farming has grown worldwide. About 99 million hectares are used for organic farming worldwide; by 2023, that number will have increased by 2.5 million hectares. In comparison to the prior year, this indicates a 2.6% increase. In 2023, there is 4.3 million organic producers globally, with 2.36 million in India leading the way (Willer et al., 2025). With yearly growth rates of about 25%, India's domestic organic food sector is expanding significantly. By the financial year 2025, the market is expected to be valued at ₹64 billion (Statista, 2025). Organic products from India are widely available in foreign markets, including exports to the United States, the European Union, Canada, Great Britain, and Australia. 261,000 metric tonnes of exports were made in fiscal year 2024, bringing the total realisation to USD 494.80 million (APEDA, 2024). The market's consistent growth is a clear indication of the significance of organic food. Products made in compliance with the Organic Food Production Act are designated by the label word "organic." In accordance with international organic principles, organic food is defined as food free of chemicals, pesticides, and growth hormones; antibiotics and genetically modified organisms are not allowed in animal husbandry; artificial colouring, artificial sweeteners, artificial flavours, and hydrogenated fats are also forbidden (Soil Association, 2001). Organic food is becoming an increasing trend in the food sector as sustainability becomes a greater focus of food product development (McCarthy & Liu, 2017). As people become more aware of health, organic food consumption is rapidly increasing in every country, regardless of whether it is developed, developing, or less developed (Yadav & Pathak, 2016).



Recent studies demonstrate that customers are fully aware of organic food (Asif et al., 2018; Apaolaza et al., 2018; Hansen et al., 2018;), although consumers' regular purchasing of organic food is comparatively low. It appears that people are becoming more aware of organic food products, but this knowledge is not translating into actual purchases of organic food. According to Ajzen (1991), purchase intention is the willingness to engage in or perform out a particular behaviour. In recent years, there have been many attempts to predict consumer purchase behaviour by understanding purchase intention towards organic food (Anisimova, 2016; Asif et al., 2018; Chen et al., 2014; Teng & Wang, 2015; Yazdanpanah & Forouzani, 2015).

Consumer purchase intention towards organic food is influenced by a wide range of factors, including demographic and psychographic characteristics (attitudes, subjective norms, etc.) (Demirtas, 2018). However, despite the growing demand for organic food products, a variety of obstacles prevent many consumers from fulfilling their goals of purchasing organic. Price and availability are two major obstacles that keep consumers from routinely buying organic food products, but there are other important ones as well, such as a lack of knowledge, distrust about organic claims, and uncertainty about how their decisions will affect the environment (Rana & Paul, 2017, Singh & Verma, 2017). According to several researchers, attitude plays a significant role in predicting the intention to buy organic foods (Gundala et al., 2022; Liu et al., 2021; Aitken et al., 2020). Subjective norms have also been discovered as a significant predictor of the impact of social influence on behavioural intentions. Results from a study that included respondents from Pakistan, Iran, and Turkey showed that consumers' awareness of organic goods had a favourable effect on their intention to buy, and that attitude and subjective norms were stronger predictors of intention to buy organic food (Asif et al., 2018).

According to earlier research, purchase intentions were measured using a variety of theoretical frameworks. The most often used theoretical frameworks were the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) and the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB). Other theoretical frameworks used in previous research include the environmental value–attitude–system model (Pandey & Khare, 2015), the food choice questionnaire (Escobar-López et al., 2017), the self-concept theory and means-end theory (Husic-Mehmedovic et al., 2017), and the stimulus–organism–response (Lee & Yun, 2015). To understand organic food consumption, the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) is applied. Numerous empirical research on the consumption of organic food have employed the theory of reasoned action, which has been widely adopted to assess a variety of human actions (Teng & Wang, 2015; Zibret et al., 2016; Gundala et al., 2022; Kumar et al., 2023).

According to Fishbein's (1979) theory of reasoned action, people make decisions based on their intentions to engage in a certain behaviour (Han & Kim, 2010). Fishbein & Ajzen (1977) argue that people select the most rational course of action from the choices available when they make decisions. The two components of the TRA are the subjective norm (perceived social pressure to perform or refrain from performing the behaviour) and the attitude (an individual's positive or negative assessment regarding a particular behaviour); both of these have an impact on behavioural intention, which serves as a stand-in for actual behaviour itself (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993). Similarly, this study predicts purchase intention using consumer attitude and subjective norms.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### *Attitude*

The theory of reasoned action asserts that consumer attitude is a significant predictor of behavioural intention (Fishbein 1979). Attitude includes both affective and cognitive components; affective is concerned with emotion, while cognitive is concerned with thought (Ajzen & Driver, 1991). According to a study by Eagly & Chaiken (2007) attitude is the psychological process of evaluating something favourably or unfavourably. Thøgersen (2016) and Chen (2014) asserted that attitude towards a behaviour and intention to carry it out are positively correlated. This suggests that the intention to engage in that behaviour would increase with a more positive attitude.

According to Yazdanpanah & Forouzani (2015) the most crucial element in influencing young Iranian consumers' intentions to purchase organic food is their attitude. Fleşeriu et al., (2020) found that consumers are more likely to buy organic food because they see it as a healthier option. This depicts that health-conscious attitudes are associated with higher purchase intention. According to their research, consumers who are more health conscious and well-being were more intended to consistently buy organic items and to believe the labels. According to Sharma & Sinha (2020) consumers who are more conscious of the adverse impacts of conventional agriculture on the environment are more likely to have positive attitude towards organic food, which in turn influences their purchase intention. According to Singh & Verma, (2017) Indian consumers, especially those living in urban area, believe that organic food is superior than conventional food result in more positive attitudes. This mindset is further supported and the intention to purchase organic products is increased by the perceived safety and absence of dangerous chemicals. According to Nuttavuthisit et al., (2017) consumers' attitudes are more favourable and their intention to buy is increased when they have trust in the validity and certification of organic food. This emphasises importance of trust-building and openness in the organic food industry. Tandon et al., (2020) found no significant relationship between attitude and the purchase behaviour of organic food. The literature currently in publication shows that research findings regarding the relationship between attitude and organic food purchasing intention are inconsistent. To confirm the association between the two factors, more research should be done in different contexts.

### *Subjective norms*



Subjective norms are the social pressure on an individual to follow or associate his behaviour with the behaviour of the groups close to him such as his family and friends. Such norms are the belief that a significant person or group will like and favour a particular behaviour (Ajzen, 1991). There is a direct and positive relation between subjective norms and purchase intention of the consumers towards organic food products (Tarkiainen & Sundqvist, 2005). Certainly, subjective norm has been acknowledged as a vital factor of social influence that definitely has an impact on behavioural intentions (Ajzen, 1980). Therefore, a person's intention to consume organic foods are probable to be strengthened if they believe that their loved ones expect them to do so, or they wish to be recognized with other people who are consuming organic food (Chen, 2007).

Additionally, Basha & Lal (2019) discovered that consumers' intentions to purchase organic food are positively impacted by subjective norms. Using the theory of reasoned action, Ling & Ang, (2018) investigated the factors influencing lecturers' intentions to purchase organic food. They discovered that social norms positively influence their intention to buy organic food. According to Sharma & Sinha, (2020) social sites which promote sustainability and wellness significantly impact purchase intention of metropolitan consumers towards organic food products. People with highly skilled and have high income level are more adaptive toward sustainable and health-conscious behaviours, which substantiate the influence of subjective norms on their intention to buy. Because they can easily access information and can pay high price for organic items, these people are more likely to adhere to the social norms around organic food (Singh & Verma, 2017). Kalam et al., (2025) suggest that when influencers promote for organic products, their followers are more inclined to embrace them because they believe they are more valuable, which increases their intention to buy. A large number of consumers engage in online communities and forums where organic food is discussed. People feel more socially obligated to buy organic food in order to conform to the standards of their social group as a result of the sense of collective identity this fosters around the consumption of organic food. According to Devi et al., (2023) online communities promote organic products as a component of a larger, socially responsible lifestyle, and also have a big influence on consumers' purchase intentions. Nam, Nga, & Huan (2019) investigated how attitudes and subjective norms influence consumers' intentions to purchase food in both every day and alarming situations. Subjective norms do not significantly affect purchasing intentions under normal circumstances, but attitude does in both cases. Further investigation is required in light of the previously mentioned findings about the influence of subjective norms on the intention towards organic food products purchases.

## **2. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

The study will examine influence of consumer attitudes and subjective norms towards consumer purchase intention organic food. Prior studies have mostly examined India's organic food consumption patterns. Research in Punjab has been extremely limited. Studies by Sharma & Pandey (2018) and Joshi et al. (2019) in other Indian states, like Rajasthan and Maharashtra, investigated the factors i.e. health consciousness, environmental consciousness, and trust in determining the consumption of organic food. By focusing on the market of Punjab, this study aims to fill the existed gap by providing valuable insights into how consumer attitudes and subjective norms influence consumers' purchase intentions to buy organic food products. Businesses, marketers, and producers in Punjab can develop strategies that appeal and encourage local consumers towards sustainable consumption of organic food by taking these factors into consideration.

### **OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY**

To analyse the relationship between consumer attitude, subjective norm and purchase intention for organic food products.

To evaluate the role of consumer attitude and subjective norm in influencing purchase intention towards organic food products.

### **HYPOTHESES FOR THE STUDY**

**H1:** There is no significant relationship between consumer attitude and purchase intention.

**H2:** Consumer attitude has no significant effect on purchase intention.

**H3:** There is no significant relationship between Subjective Norm and purchase intention.

**H4:** Subjective Norm has no significant effect on purchase intention.

## **3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **Sample Size and Target Population**

The consumers of organic products in Punjab served as the basis for this study. Convenience sampling was employed to get responses from the participants in this cross-sectional study design. With the aid of Google Docs and hard copies of the surveys, the study's questionnaire was distributed both offline and online. 200 questionnaires were distributed in all, though only 152 were returned, and two of them were discarded after it was discovered that they were missing answers. Consequently, a comprehensive analysis was conducted using a sample size of 150. The respondents had diverse demographic profiles in terms of age, gender, income, education, and occupation; Table 1 depicts their demographic profile.

### **Measurement**



A meticulous adaptation of previously published scales was done for all three constructs. Study has taken three constructs i.e. two are independent, and one is dependent. All the items for the construct consumer attitude were taken from Al-Swidi et al., (2013) for subjective norm the items were adopted from the study of Al-Swidi et al., (2013) and Vermeir & Verbeke et al., (2008). The items used for purchase intention were adopted from the study of Wee et al., (2014). In order to construct the questionnaire, a five-point Likert scale was used, with 1 denoting strongly disagree and 5 denoting strongly agree.

#### Data Analysis

The data was analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 26. To analyse quantitative data, a variety of statistical tools and techniques were employed, including Pearson's correlation and multiple linear regression.

## 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

#### Description of the sample

Analysis of customer demographics was performed, and the results are summarized in table 1. The survey was completed by 35.3% males and 64.7% females. In terms of age, four age categories were delineated where 50.7 % are in the range of 20-30 years old, followed by 29.3% in the age range of 31-40 years old, 12% are aged between 41-50 years old, and 6.7% in the age group of 51-60 years old. The sample analysis results also show that most of the respondents had an income up to ₹20,000 and the majority of the consumers 53.3 were postgraduates followed by graduation 32.7%.

**Table 1: The summary of the demographic profiles of the respondents.**

Category	Type/Group	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	53	35.3
	Female	97	64.7
Marital Status	Married	74	49.3
	Unmarried	76	50.7
Age	20-30	76	50.7
	31-40	44	29.3
	41-50	18	12.0
	51-60	10	6.7
	Above 60	2	1.3
Highest academic qualification	High school	7	4.7
	Secondary School	7	4.7
	Graduation	49	32.7
	Post Graduation	80	53.3
	MPhil/PhD	7	4.7
Monthly Income	Up to ₹20,000	59	39.3
	₹20,001 - ₹40,000	34	22.7
	₹40,001 - ₹60,000	20	13.3
	₹60,001-₹80,000	18	12.0
	Above ₹80,000	19	12.7

**Table 2. Pearson's correlations matrix**

	Purchase Intention	Consumer Attitude	Subjective Norms
Purchase Intention	1		
Consumer Attitude	0.703**	1	
Subjective Norms	0.536**	0.561**	1

**\*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).**

Pearson's correlation was applied using the IBM SPSS statistics program to determine the relationship between attitude of the consumer, subjective norm and purchase intention for organic products. As can be seen in table 2 the correlation between purchase intention and consumer attitude is strongly positive ( $r = 0.703$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). This indicates that consumers who hold favourable attitudes toward organic food are more likely to intend to purchase organic products. This substantial favourable association has been supported by prior research Bai et al., (2019) and Joshi & Singh, (2019) both found that customers who believe that organic food is healthier and more sustainable are far more likely to have higher purchase intentions. There is a moderately strong positive correlation between purchase intention and subjective norms ( $r = 0.536$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). This implies that customers' propensity to buy organic products rises when they feel more social pressure to do so (from peers, family, or society). This study supports the findings of Nguyen et al., (2017) and Pacho et al., (2020), who emphasised that social influences are important in encouraging the purchase of organic food, particularly among young individuals. Social groups, parents, and friends all have an impact on consumers' buying intentions. As a result of this, H1 and H3 is not supported.

**Table 3: Result of Multiple regression analysis predicting purchase intention of organic food products**

Coefficients						
Parameter	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	VIF
	Beta	Std. Error	β			
(Constant)	4.163	1.1681		2.477	0.014	
Consumer Attitude	0.480	0.056	0.587**	8.533	0.000	1.458
Subjective Norms	0.204	0.068	0.207**	3.015	0.003	1.458
F-Value = 80.744						
R= 0.724						
R square (R2) = 0.523						

Note: \*\*  $p < 0.01$

Based on the findings of a multiple regression analysis using the IBM SPSS statistics program, as shown in Table 3, these two factors (independent variables) account for 52.3% of explained variance for consumer purchase intention towards organic food products;  $F = 80.744$ ,  $p = < 0.001$ ,  $R^2 = 0.523$ . Consumer attitude had a significant impact on consumers' intention to purchase organic food products ( $\beta = 0.587$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ). This finding is in line with earlier research Fleşeriu et al., (2020) discovered that one of the best indicators of buy intention was the attitude of consumers regarding organic food. They maintained that consumers are more likely to plan to buy organic items if they believe that organic food is healthier or more environmentally friendly. In the same vein, Gupta & Sharma, (2019) discovered that increased purchase intentions are associated with favourable attitudes regarding the environmental impact and health advantages of organic food. As shown in table 3 subjective norms significantly influence ( $\beta = 0.207$ ,  $p = 0.003$ ) purchase intention towards organic food products which is consistent with the results of Al-Swidi et al. (2014) consumers' decisions to buy organic food are greatly influenced by subjective norms, such as peer, family, and friend influence. In particular, Scalco et al., (2017) discovered that subjective norms—like peer, family, and friend influence—have a major impact on consumers' decisions to buy organic food, which is consistent with the results of this study. Regarding organic food, Teng et al., (2015) emphasised that social influences from friends, family, and social networks motivate people to buy organic food. This is particularly true in cultures where eating organic food is viewed as a healthy or socially desirable habit. As a result of this, H1 and H4 is not supported.

## 5. CONCLUSION

The use of organic farming methods is becoming more and more common among producers, and smaller farms are increasingly considering them as a practical option. Consumers are becoming more aware about risks that chemically treated





products pose to their health. As a result, they consider organic food on a daily basis. It is significant to understand the role of antecedents which influence consumer purchase intention. The current study attempts to explain the current scenario regarding consumers' purchase intention towards organic food products. According to the study, consumer attitudes and subjective norms have a significant impact on consumers' intentions to buy organic food products. Thus, it can be concluded that a person's intention to buy organic foods is influenced by both positive and negative perceptions about the product as well as the influence of other important individuals in his life. The results indicate that in order to encourage the use of organic food, marketing efforts should concentrate on boosting favourable consumer attitudes and utilising social influence.

## 6. IMPLICATIONS

These findings are valuable to organic food retailers and marketers in developing countries seeking to increase sales and achieve continuous business expansion. Organic foods should be promoted through education and awareness campaigns, as well as by promoting their health benefits, so that real purchase actions can be stimulated. Business owners should consider implementing a word-of-mouth marketing strategy to further boost organic food sales by taking advantage of subjective norms' persuasive power. Educating consumers about organic product certification and labelling would increase demand for organic products among those who are unsure about the accurateness of the products. For consumer confidence to be assured, it is essential that the public and private sectors collaborate in organic production. With informative work, organic food marketers can grow the confidence of consumers in their products. The promotion of organic consumption should be supported by consumer associations and organic consumption groups. Targeting and positioning strategies should be implemented by retailers or marketers to increase demand for organic food products. The factors influencing consumer purchase intention towards organic food products need to be studied further, including cultural differences and emotional obstacles as well as psychological obstacles.

## 7. LIMITATIONS

The study's limitations should be taken into consideration when evaluating its findings, such as the following:

- This paper considered only two constructs (consumer attitude and subjective norms) towards the purchase intention, future research may include additional variables like (trust, health consciousness, knowledge, availability, labelling) in the context of organic food consumption.
- It is also important to compare the perceptions of organic food purchasers and users with those of non-purchasers and non-users.
- A larger sample size would have given greater statistical power, but due to the small sample size, the power of the statistical analysis was lower.

Before interpreting the study's findings broadly, it is important to consider its shortcomings.

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