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Purchase Intention and Organic Food in Nepal

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ABSTRACT

Increasing customer awareness, environmental consciousness and health awareness are driving the demand for organic products. The current research investigates factors affecting Nepalese consumers' preference for organic food, focusing on product knowledge, convenience, environmental and health considerations. Data from 462 participants was collected from three urban centres of Itahari, Biratnagar, and Dharan. Structure equation modelling was used to examine the relationship between the variables. The findings indicate that health consciousness considerably drives buying intention. Organic food knowledge and environmental consciousness were significant for pointing out the importance of environmental factors in consumer decisions. The study emphasises the need for focused market compounds and increasing accessibility to organic food in cities with scarce organic food delivery. The enlargement of Nepal's locally produced food sector depends critically on raising consumer knowledge, highlighting the advantages of organic products for health, and expanding market accessibility. These findings add value to the global debate on food consumption for sustainable development in emerging economies.

Keywords: *Organic food, Purchase intention, Health consciousness, environmental awareness, Nepal.*

1.0 Introduction

The global demand for organic food, driven by surging consumer interest in food

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safety and environmental sustainability linked to health and well-being, continues to increase. however, the organic food sector is yet still in its baby stages in most parts of the country. The present scenario shows excellent potential, based on changing preference patterns in most consumers toward healthier consumption and environmental aspects. The key objective of this literature review is to synthesize existing studies for determining the primary factors that determine the purchase intention of organic food by consumers in Nepal, and the present study forms a theoretical background.

Like most developing countries, Nepal has also undergone a transition from traditional food production systems to industrialized systems of food production, with intensive use of synthetic chemicals. Consumer groups have raised several concerns regarding pesticide misuse and related hazards. There is, therefore, a movement to encourage organic farming and sustainable agriculture. Yet, in the country, consumption of organic foods remains a preserve of urban areas. There is an enormous untapped potential in the rural areas.

Although extensive studies on consumer preference for organic food exist in developed countries and a few Asian markets, very few studies have addressed Nepalese consumers. From the available literature, health concerns, environmental awareness, product knowledge, and convenience are stated to be major factors that drive purchase behaviour. Addressing this gap, the current study aims to examine these factors in the context of Nepal, which will ultimately add to a wider understanding of organic food markets in developing countries. It will help the policymakers and the industry in having actionable suggestions that can drive growth in Nepal's organic food market.

2.0 Literature Review

Organic food is in increasing demand worldwide, impelled by buyers who are alert of the safety of food eating, environmental sustainability, and personal health benefits. Organic food markets are nascent in Nepal but hold vast potential, considering that many Nepalese are becoming mindful of changes in consumer preferences and the increasing importance of sustainable agriculture. This literature review discusses important determinants affecting consumers' buying objectives for organic food by synthesising findings since past studies as a theoretical framework to underpin this research (Uttam *et al.*, 2024). Interest in organic foods has been increasing continuously around the world due to rising concerns about the possible impacts of intensive agricultural practices on human health and the environment (Manna *et al.*, 2021).

Similar to most developing countries, modernisation in Nepal's agriculture brought about a dramatic shift from traditional to industrialised modes of food production.

The Nepalese agricultural sector is highly dependent on artificial chemicals to control pests, weeds, and illnesses and attain high productivity. A lack of adequate training among farmers has led to improper use of pesticides; thus, application levels, frequencies, and pre-harvest intervals, as recommended for proper use, are rarely strictly followed (Marete *et al.*, 2021).

Along with increasing concerns regarding food safety and environmental degradation, various initiatives have been undertaken in Nepal through organic farming promotion and certification programs. These, therefore, would embrace sustainable agriculture and aim to reduce its ecological footprint such that food production is safer for consumers (Mishra *et al.*, 2023).

Organic food production in Nepal has gained momentum because of its rich natural resources, labour availability, and growing consumer consciousness of health and ecological issues. However, Nepal's organic food market remains in its infancy and is characterised by limited production and consumption (Subedi *et al.*, 2024).

Although the global biological food marketplace has expanded significantly, Nepal's domestic market has continued to emerge. Organic food consumption is largely concentrated in urban centres, such as Kathmandu, Pokhara, and Biratnagar, where consumers exhibit greater purchasing power and awareness of food safety. While these trends are indicative of the growth of the sector, organic sales in rural areas are still a minuscule sign of the potential that has not been tapped. The expected strong progress in call for organic food in Nepal hinges on the rising income and shifting demand of first-time urban consumers. As Nepal's population continues to urbanise and prioritise health and environmental sustainability, the organic food market has a significant potential for expansion (Subedi *et al.*, 2024).

Previous scholarships of consumers' ecological food preferences have primarily focused on developed countries, particularly North America and Europe Eyinade *et al.* (2021). Finally, research has been conducted in Asian markets to investigate consumer attitudes, preferences, and buying behaviours toward chemical free food. For example, discrete choice models, discriminant analysis, confirmatory factor analysis, and structural equation modelling (SEM) to investigate the factors influencing organic food consumption (Hasan *et al.*, 2024). Such research has identified variables such as health concerns, environmental awareness, product knowledge, and purchasing convenience as key determinants of consumer behaviour (Su *et al.*, 2022).

Although significant empirical research exists on organic food in Western and other Asian markets, limited attention has been paid to Nepalese consumers' buying inten regarding organic food. The essential role of strategic actions in labelling and trust-building efforts is to enhance the promotion of organic food (Mishra *et al.*, 2024). This

study purposes to address this gap by finding and assessing the factors that influence purchasing intentions in Nepal. Health issues, environmental impacts, organic awareness, and convenience were highlighted, with the purchase of intent serving as the dependent variable. The findings aim to add to the expanding notion on organic food markets in developing nations and offer recommendations for leaders wanting to encourage ecological food eating in Nepal.

2.1 Health concerns

Health is deliberated one of the utmost noteworthy causes affecting shoppers' intention to buying organic food. Biological foods are considered harmless and better as they contain no traces of synthetic pesticides or chemicals. Iqbal *et al.* (2021) noted that health-conscious individuals purchase organic foods, particularly when food safety is severely compromised. Other studies conducted in Asian countries such as China and India support this evidence by demonstrating that health awareness can directly affect consumer behaviour (Nagaraj, 2021). Therefore, health can be considered a significant determinant in Nepal, where pesticide misuse has become rampant in agriculture.
In relation to the above argument, the subsequent hypothesis is offered:
H1: Health concerns positively effects consumers' purchase intentions for organic food in Nepal.

2.2 Environmental awareness

Environmentally sensitive consumers prefer organic foods owing to their ecological advantages. Organic farming is considered to reduce environmental pollution, improve the health and structure of the soil, and conserve biodiversity. According to Wojciechowska-Solis & Barska (2021), environmentally sensitive consumers show a greater preference for organic products. In nations like Nepal, where environmental deterioration is a growing concern, the advocacy for organic food coincides with heightened consumer awareness of sustainability issues. Therefore, the subsequent hypothesis is posited:
H2: Environmental awareness positively influences consumers' purchase intention for organic food in Nepal.

2.3 Knowledge of organic food

Buying decisions concerning organic food are effected by shoppers' understanding of its characteristics, certifications, and advantages. According to Britwum *et al.* (2021), informed consumers tend to trust organic products and are more likely to consider them in their product purchase decisions. However, barriers to organic

certification exist, even in emerging markets (Nandwani *et al.*, 2021), and such actions are often poorly understood. Consumer education on organic farming practices and certification systems in Nepal can positively affect market growth. From the above debate, the subsequent hypothesis is stated:

H3: Knowledge of organic food positively influences consumers' purchase intentions for organic food in Nepal.

2.4 Convenience

Consumer behaviour is significantly driven by the accessibility of purchasing organic food. The accessibility, availability, and effort needed to procure organic items are advantages of organic products. Daraboina *et al.* (2024) observed that the acquisition of organic food is influenced by its accessibility in local markets. Organic foods may have limited adoption in Nepal due to their restricted distribution in rural regions. Enhancements in accessibility influence consumers' purchasing objectives. From the above debate, the subsequent hypothesis is proposed:

H4: Convenience positively influences consumers' purchase intention for organic food in Nepal.

2.5 Purchase intention

A consumer buying intent refers to their likelihood of buying a product on certain occasions. According to the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) (Ajzen,1991), a person's intention towards engaging in a specific behaviour is attributed to their attitude, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control. In people's decision on whether to or not to purchase organic food depends on the condition, convenience knowledge, environmental sensitivity, and awareness of healthfulness (Xu *et al.*, 2024). Understanding these relationships is important for predicting consumer behaviour in Nepal's emerging organic food market.

3.0 Methodology

An exploratory research design was used to examine the factors that affect customers' purchasing intentions for organic foods in Nepal. This study was conducted in three urban cities of Province 1: Itahari, Biratnagar, and Dharan. The chosen locations were based on growing urbanization, consumer awareness of organic products, and the mixed demographics that represented an emerging organic food market.

A structured questionnaire was the primary tool for data gathering. After reviewing pertinent literature, a questionnaire was developed to validate the constructs. It

evaluates factors related to health concerns, environmental consciousness, organic food understanding, convenience, and intention to buy. Online data collection was conducted using Google Forms, which was disseminated through Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp. It enabled us to quickly and cheaply reach a large number of people. The 462 valid responses that were collected represented a wide variety of clients from the three selected cities. SEM in the form of AMOS 21 was employed in analyzing the data. The assessment of the measurement model was performed through exploratory factor analysis, confirmatory factor analysis, Cronbach's alpha for reliability, and item-item correlations. This ensures the constructions' accuracy and reliability. For testing the fit and exploring the suggested correlations among the variables, a structural model was used.

Table 1 summarizes the scales used to measure the variables, thus providing a comprehensive overview of the constructs and their operationalization. The results of these analyses provide valuable insights into the determinants of customer behaviour in Nepal's burgeoning organic food markets (See Table 1).

Table 1: Measurement Scale of Construct

Construct	Code	Measurement Scale Statement	Source
Health Concerns	HC1	In terms of health benefits, I contend that organic food surpasses conventional food.	Adapted from Yiridoe *et al.* (2005)
	HC2	Consuming organic food reduces health risks associated with chemical residues.	Adapted from Schifferstein & Oude Ophuis (1998)
	HC3	I prefer organic food for its nutritional benefits.	Adapted from Aschemann-Witzel *et al.* (2013)
Environmental Awareness	EA1	Organic food production is more environmentally sustainable than traditional farming.	Adapted from Thompson (2000)
	EA2	Choosing organic food supports environmental conservation efforts.	Adapted from Lockie *et al.* (2002)
	EA3	Organic farming reduces pollution and soil degradation.	Adapted from Schifferstein and Ophuis (1998)
Knowledge of Organic Food	KO1	I acknowledge the distinctions between conventional and organic food products.	Adapted from Pino *et al.* (2012)
	KO2	I understand the benefits of consuming organic food.	Adapted from Yiridoe *et al.* (2005)
	KO3	I am familiar with the certification labels of organic food in Nepal.	Adapted from Pino *et al.* (2012)

Convenience	CN1	Organic food is readily available in stores near me.	Adapted from Schifferstein and Ophuis (1998)
	CN2	I find it easy to purchase organic food when needed.	Adapted from Thompson (2000)
	CN3	Organic food stores are conveniently located.	Adapted from Pino *et al.* (2012)
Purchase Intention	PI1	In the future, I plan to acquire organic sustenance.	Adapted from Lockie *et al.* (2002)
	PI2	I will advocate for organic food to my friends and family.	Thompson (2000)
	PI3	I prefer to buy organic food over conventional food despite the price difference.	Adapted from Schifferstein and Ophuis (1998)

4.0 Results

The demographic samples of the 462 study participants are presented in Table 1. Male respondents made up 47.8% of the sample, while female respondents made up about half (52.2%).

Table 2. Demographic Profile of Respondents

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Female	239	52.2
	Male	223	47.8
Age Group	Below 30	146	31.6
	30–40	168	36.4
	40–50	74	16.0
	50 and above	74	16.0
Education Level	Below Bachelor's Degree	92	19.9
	Bachelor's Degree	224	48.5
	Master's Degree and above	146	31.6
Occupation	Students	185	40.0
	Private Professionals	149	32.2
	Public Professionals	128	27.7
Income Level (NPR)	Below 35,000	138	29.9
	35,001–55,000	181	39.2
	55,001–75,000	105	22.7
	Above 75,000	38	8.2

Most responders (36.4%) were between the ages of 30 and 40, and 31.6 percent were under 30. Most participants (48.5%) had a bachelor's degree, while 31.6% had a master's degree or above. 40 percent of the respondents were students, followed by professionals in the private sector (32.2%) and the public sector (27.7%). Second, most respondents (39.2%) with incomes between NRs 35,001 and 55,000 (29.9%) earned less than NRs 35,000 (See Table 2).

This study examines the factors influencing Nepalese consumers' intentions to buy biological food and offers validity and reliability evaluations for the constructs used (Table 3). The tools used to evaluate the constructs of the model must be reliable and have a high degree of validity. For each construct, this table displays Factor Loading, Composite Reliability (CR), Average Variance Extracted (AVE), and Cronbach's alpha—all of which are crucial indicators of the calibre of the measurement model. Factor loading correlates with the corresponding construct. Most studies recommend that items be strong indicators of a construct by loading factors with loadings greater than 0.70. All factor loadings for PI1, PI2, and PI3 in the case of Purchase Intention, HC1, HC2, HC3, and other constructs were above 0.70, reflecting the strong relationship between the items and respective constructs (See Table 3). This shows that the items are greatly correlated with their constructs and can be used to measure the intended variables.

Table 3. Reliability and Validity of Constructs

Construct	Code	Factor Loading	CR	AVE	Cronbach's Alpha
Purchase Intention	PI1	0.76	0.87	0.63	0.83
	PI2	0.81			
	PI3	0.79			
Health Consciousness	HC1	0.79	0.88	0.71	0.85
	HC2	0.82			
	HC3	0.84			
Environmental Concern	EC1	0.72	0.85	0.60	0.81
	EC2	0.74			
	EC3	0.77			
Knowledge of Organic Food	KF1	0.78	0.86	0.65	0.84
	KF2	0.76			
	KF3	0.80			
Convenience	CV1	0.75	0.86	0.62	0.82
	CV2	0.73			
	CV3	0.78			

Composite Reliability (CR) is another Internal Consistency instrument that evaluates a construct's reliability when different factor loadings are considered. A CR value above 0.70 is usually considered acceptable which means that the items constitute reliable measures of the construct. Internal consistency was confirmed for all the constructs through CR values, which exceed 0.70 and indicate strong, reliable internal consistency: 0.87 Purchasing intention, 0.88; health consciousness, 0.86; knowledge of organic food, 0.86; convenience. The amount of variance taken by a construct as a proportion of the variance due to measurement error was measured using the Average Variance Extracted (AVE). If the variables explained more than half of the variance in the items, it was considered acceptable if the AVE value was more significant than 0.50. This study finds that the AVE values of the constructs, Health Consciousness (0.71), Knowledge of Organic Food (0.65), and other constructs meet the 0.50 threshold indicating good convergent validity. The items used to measure each construct can be regarded as valid indicators of the underlying factors.

Cronbach's alpha is one common measure of internal consistency, with which the test measures whether all items in the construct measure with roughly the same scale of the basic idea. Usually, a score of more than 0.70 is quite acceptable and that shows that this construct has robust internal consistency. All Cronbach's alpha on constructs of purchase intention (.83), health consciousness (.85) and convenience (0.82) in the study exceeded this threshold and exhibited robust internal consistency. These results show that the constructs were measured reliably, and thus there is confidence in the accuracy of the findings. All the variables in this study have a minimum threshold for reliability and validity. They all have factor loadings greater than 0.70, CR and Cronbach's alpha values higher than 0.70, and AVE values greater than 0.50. The findings showed that the measurement model was good with high internal consistency and good convergent validity. The results show that the constructs are being assessed with proper items, which confirms the appropriateness of the items used to understand consumers' obtaining intent of organic food in Nepal and, hence, further making the measurement model a sound one to further develop the study.

Table 4 summaries the findings of the Fornell-Larcker criterion for assessing discriminant validity. If the square root of the variables' Average Variance Extracted (AVE) is better than the correlation amid them, the construct is said to have discriminant validity. Compared to the links of the variables with other constructs, such as Health Consciousness (0.51), Knowledge of Organic Food (0.46), and convenience (0.47), the AVE for Purchase Intention (0.83) was significantly higher (See Table 4). Since there would otherwise be a variety of patterns, the fact that this pattern is consistent across all constructs suggests that there are no constructs of the same type. Because all values exceed

the Fornell-Larcker criterion of being more significant than the associations among the constructs as determined by the square root of the AVE, the results thus validate the discriminant validity of the constructs.

Table 4: Discriminant Validity

Construct	Purchase Intention	Health Consciousness	Knowledge of Organic Food	Convenience
Purchase Intention	**0.83**			
Health Consciousness	0.51	**0.84**		
Knowledge of Organic Food	0.46	0.60	**0.74**	
Convenience	0.47	0.53	0.55	**0.80**

5.0 The Structure Model

The structural model developed relationships between independent variables (Health Consciousness, Knowledge of Organic Food and Convenience) and the dependent variable (Purchase Intention). Indices such as Chi-square (χ^2), RMSEA, CFI, and TLI were used to evaluate the goodness of the proposed model. RMSEA of 0.072, and both TLI (0.92) and CFI (0.93) are above the 0.90 thresholds we set for a good fit, whereas non-significant Chi-square ($p > 0.05$) supports the fitness. In summary, as per the above-fit indices, we can conclude that it is a good model fit.

Table 5: Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Path	β Value	P Value	Remarks
H1	Health Consciousness → Purchase Intention	0.45	0.001	Supported ($p < 0.05$)
H2	Knowledge of Organic Food → Purchase Intention	0.38	0.003	Supported ($p < 0.05$)
H3	Convenience → Purchase Intention	0.33	0.025	Supported ($p < 0.05$)
H4	Environmental Concern → Purchase Intention	0.41	0.001	Supported ($p < 0.05$)

The path measurements show that the significance and track of the association and the R^2 of purchase are the volume of variance explained by the independent variables. The model supports hypotheses on determining key determinants of consumers' purchase intention concerning biological diet in Nepal and further contributes to the understanding of consumers' behaviour in this market.

H1 finds a strong positive correlation between purchase intention and health consciousness (β = 0.45). The findings highlight the importance of health-related factors in organic food consumption by showing that consumers who are health-conscious are more likely to purchase organic food. H2 indicates a relationship between organic food knowledge and β = 0.38, indicating that a greater awareness of organic food boosts purchase intention. Additionally, H3 demonstrates that convenience, as indicated by a βeta value of 0.33, raises purchase intention; when organic food is available, consumers are more likely to buy it (See Table 5).

In H4, it is found that purchase intuitions significantly improve environmental concern (β = 0.41). Organic food is sustainable because consumers who care more about the environment and human health are more likely to purchase organic food. Lastly, H5 created a strong (β = 0.42) relationship by combining the effects of all variables. Accordingly, health consciousness, organic food knowledge, convenience, and a strong concern for the environment all increase the likelihood that people will buy organic food.

6.0 Discussion

This study clarifies the primary factors affecting customers' purchasing intentions for organic foods in Nepal, with all four latent factors—health consciousness, knowledge of organic food, convenience, and environmental concerns—demonstrating positive and statistically significant impacts on purchase intention. The findings align with other research conducted in different locations, indicating that these characteristics are universally significant in elucidating consumer behaviour about organic food (Schifferstein & Ophuis, 1998; Lockie *et al.*, 2002).

Health consciousness was the most significant factor related to purchase intention, with a beta value of 0.45, implying that health-conscious consumers prefer organic products. Organic food is generally perceived as healthier than its conventionally produced counterpart (Yiridoe *et al.*, 2005). It is in tandem with the general trend in other parts of the world. The findings were that the demand for organic food increased with increasing health consciousness in Nepal. This again points to the fact that campaigns designed by marketers and government departments should highlight health benefits offered by organic foods. In the same way, organic food knowledge impacted purchase intention quite remarkably, (β = 0.38). It shows that high levels of knowledge on advantages and ways of producing biological foodstuff improve their purchasing tendencies. Therefore, educating or creating an awareness program may be essential for familiarizing people with organic foodstuff (Nguyen, Park & Choi, 2021).

Since the organic food markets of Nepal are at a nascent stage, it may be the most important approach to enhance consumer awareness through informational campaigns. Access to organic food was a strong predictor of customer purchasing behaviour (β = 0.33); the easier it is to obtain the food, the more likely one is to purchase it. This discovery is essential for the advancement of the organic food market in Nepal, a nation where accessibility is still restricted, especially beyond major urban centres. Initiatives must be undertaken to enhance the accessibility and distribution of organic food items through both physical retail outlets and online platforms, thereby broadening the market to a larger consumer base (Rokaya & Pandey, 2023).

Moreover, purchase intention was favourably influenced by environmental concern (β = 0.41), indicating that greater environmental awareness among consumers correlates with an increased propensity to prefer organic food. This reflects a broader global awareness of the environmental costs associated with conventional operations and the beneficial effects of organic methods (Nagaraj, 2021). It is crucial for Nepal, where environmental challenges like deforestation and pollution are widespread, to attain its organic food goal and demonstrate that organic food is ecologically advantageous (Manchanda, 2024). (Basnet, *et al.*, 2024, Rana & Paul, 2017). This study demonstrates substantial positive correlations, indicating that health, knowledge, convenience, and environmental concerns are the primary elements of organic food consumption in Nepal. These elements are individually significant and interact to shape consumer behaviour. The rising global demand for organic food and its recognised benefits are likely to persist in shaping the development of the organic food market in Nepal.

7.0 Conclusion

The Present study aims to identify the variables that impact consumers' intentions to obtain organic food in Nepal. The findings indicated that health consciousness, organic food knowledge, convenience, and environmental concerns all impacted consumers' purchase intentions. These findings have broad ramifications since they help policymakers and marketers promote pesticides free food intake, and their application improves our knowledge of Nepali consumer behaviour. The results highlight how crucial it is to dictate the advantages of organic agri-business for the environment, promote the health benefits of consumption organic food, raise consumer awareness, and expand the supply of organic food to improve convenience. Since Nepal's organic food industry is still in its infancy, these factors provide practical ways to boost consumer engagement and market demand. Future studies could look into other characteristics that affect Nepalese intake of organic food, like socioeconomic status or cultural influences. Furthermore, longitudinal studies

that look at how consumer attitudes and behaviours change over time may help us better understand the dynamics of the organic food market. The findings of this study indicate that in order to support a thriving organic food sector in Nepal, a comprehensive approach addressing issues related to accessibility, education, health, and the environment is necessary.

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