

Organic Food Purchases Among Indian Consumers: An Empirical Study of Indian Cities

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to examine the determinants of consumer intention to purchase organic food in the Indian cities of Lucknow and Greater Noida. Drawing from existing literature, four predictors were identified: food quality, support for local farmers, convenience/affordability, and animal welfare, with consumer attitude included as an overarching construct. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire from 870 respondents selected via systematic random sampling. Reliability, correlation, multiple regression, and ANOVA analyses were employed to test the hypotheses. The results indicate that food quality and supporting local farmers significantly and positively influence purchase intentions, while animal welfare exerts a negative effect. Convenience and price were not significant predictors. Importantly, overall consumer attitude explained more than 90% of the variance in purchase intention, underscoring its dominant role. These findings contribute to the literature by highlighting context-specific differences in ethical consumption and provide actionable insights for policymakers, marketers, and farmers seeking to expand India's organic food market.

Keywords

Consumer attitudes, Indian consumers, Organic foods, Purchasing determinants, Purchase intentions

1. Introduction

Due to growing consumer concerns about food safety, environmental sustainability, and health, the worldwide organic food business has grown rapidly in recent years. Consumers increasingly seek products perceived to be free from harmful chemicals and more aligned with natural production practices. In India, this trend is particularly noteworthy as awareness of healthy lifestyles expands beyond metropolitan areas into tier-two cities. Despite these developments, organic foods still face barriers, including high prices, limited availability, and consumer skepticism regarding authenticity.

Prior research has identified several factors shaping consumer behavior toward organic products. Studies conducted in developed markets highlight the importance of health consciousness, environmental concern, and ethical considerations such as animal welfare (Chen, 2007; Hjelmar, 2011). In emerging economies, however, economic factors such as affordability, product accessibility, and support for local farmers appear more salient (Basha & Lal, 2019; Gupta, 2019). Yet, the extent to which these determinants influence Indian consumers, particularly in mid-sized urban centers, remains underexplored.

This study addresses this gap by focusing on the cities of Lucknow and Greater Noida, two culturally and economically significant urban areas that reflect changing consumer lifestyles in India. Drawing on existing literature, four determinants—food quality, supporting local farmers, convenience/affordability, and animal welfare—were identified as potential predictors of purchase intention. Using a large-scale survey of 870 respondents, this research tests their relative importance and examines the role of overall consumer attitude in shaping organic food purchasing behavior.

By doing so, the study contributes to the literature on organic consumption in emerging markets, offering localized insights into consumer priorities. It also provides practical implications for policymakers, marketers, and producers seeking to promote organic food adoption in India.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Health and Quality Concerns

Consumers are increasingly concerned about food safety, nutrition, and health-related issues. Studies show that health consciousness is a major driver of organic food purchases. For instance, Madhan Kumar (2019) identified health consciousness as a critical predictor of customer sentiments towards organic food. Gupta (2019) emphasized that cleanliness and pesticide-free status are crucial for cereal grains and pulses, while taste and store quality matter for fruits and vegetables. Globally, governments and health experts have promoted balanced diets and healthy eating habits, further influencing consumer behavior (Pomsanam et al., 2014; Zakowska-Biemans, 2005).

2.2 Socio-Economic Factors

The relationship between consumer behavior and the food sector has become increasingly important. Studies have shown that consumers are influenced by personal standards and subjective norms (Madhan Kumar P, 2019). Marketing strategies, branding, and advertising campaigns also play a role in shaping consumer perceptions and purchase intentions. For instance, branded organic products often gain traction due to their perceived quality and trustworthiness.

2.3. Price and Convenience

Affordability and accessibility are significant factors in organic food purchasing decisions. Research by Kavaliauske and Ubartaute (2014–18) and Gottschalk and Leistner (2013) found that consumers prefer organic products that are reasonably priced and readily available. Hjelmar (2011) highlighted that convenience and reflexive practices influence organic food purchases. Despite higher prices, some consumers are willing to pay more for better quality and health benefits, indicating a nuanced relationship between price sensitivity and perceived value.

2.4. Ethical and Environmental Concerns

Ethical considerations such as environmental consciousness and animal welfare have been explored in various studies. While some consumers are motivated by the desire to support sustainable practices and humane treatment of animals (e.g., Body Shop's stance against animal testing), others prioritize functional benefits over ethical concerns. Basha and Lal (2019) and Husic-Mehmedovic et al. (2017) discussed the role of life equilibrium and ethical behavior in driving organic food purchases. Ethical considerations might not be the driving forces behind Indian customers' purchasing decisions, according to the present study, which discovered that backing local farmers had a negative effect and that there was no significant correlation between animal welfare and desire to purchase.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This research employed a quantitative methodology to explore the factors influencing consumer intentions regarding the purchase of organic food. Based on prior literature, four predictors—food quality (FQ), support for local farmers (SLF), convenience/affordability (CP), and animal welfare (AW)—were identified. In addition, consumer attitude (AT) was tested as an overarching predictor of purchase intention (PI).

3.2 Sampling and Data Collection

Data were collected in the Indian cities of Lucknow and Greater Noida, which were selected due to their growing urban populations, shared cultural characteristics, and increasing exposure to modern retail formats. These cities provide an appropriate context for studying organic consumption patterns in mid-sized Indian urban centers.

A structured questionnaire was distributed to consumers at major supermarkets and organic food outlets between May 2020 and December 2022. A total of 1,300 questionnaires were administered,

of which 1,000 were returned. After data cleaning, 870 valid responses were retained, yielding an effective response rate of 67%. Respondents were selected using **systematic random sampling**, ensuring representation across gender, age, and income groups.

3.2 Instrument and Measures

The questionnaire was designed in both English and Hindi, the dominant languages in the study locations. Translation and back-translation were conducted to ensure semantic accuracy. The tool comprised mostly of closed-ended items scored on a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree). Established scales from prior research were adapted to measure the constructs:

- **Food Quality (FQ):** 4 items (e.g., freshness, taste, safety).
- **Supporting Local Farmers (SLF):** 6 items (e.g., community support, rural livelihoods).
- **Convenience and Price (CP):** 6 items (e.g., affordability, accessibility).
- **Animal Welfare (AW):** 4 items (e.g., humane treatment, ethical production).
- **Purchase Intention (PI):** 13 items measuring willingness to purchase organic products.

3.3 Reliability and Validity

Construct reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha. Most constructs achieved values above the recommended 0.70 threshold (Nunnally, 1978), except for AW ($\alpha = 0.657$), which is acceptable for exploratory studies. Factor analysis confirmed the dimensionality of the constructs (KMO = 0.775).

3.4 Ethical Considerations

Participation was voluntary, and respondents provided informed consent prior to completing the survey. Anonymity and confidentiality of responses were assured. The study protocol was reviewed and approved by the School of Business Management Research Ethics Committee, Chhatrapati Shahu Ji Maharaj University, Kanpur.

4. Results

4.1 Reliability Analysis

Cronbach's alpha values demonstrated strong internal consistency for most constructs (see Table 1). All scales exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.70 (Nunnally, 1978), except Animal Welfare (AW), which showed moderate reliability ($\alpha = 0.657$) but was retained for exploratory purposes. The overall KMO value of 0.775 confirmed sampling adequacy for factor analysis.

Table 1. Reliability Statistics

Variable	No. of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Food Quality (FQ)	4	0.847
Supporting Local Farmers (SLF)	6	0.884
Convenience & Price (CP)	6	0.849
Animal Welfare (AW)	4	0.657
Purchase Intention (PI)	13	0.827

4.2 Correlation Analysis

Pearson correlation coefficients indicated that FQ, SLF, and CP were positively correlated with PI, while AW showed a weak negative correlation. All significant associations were at the 0.01 level (Table 2).

Table 2. Correlation Matrix

Variable	FQ	SLF	CP	AW	PI
Food Quality (FQ)	1				
Supporting Local Farmers (SLF)	0.088**	1			
Convenience & Price (CP)	0.157**	0.170**	1		
Animal Welfare (AW)	0.123**	0.236**	0.352**	1	
Purchase Intention (PI)	0.204**	0.171**	0.049	-0.024	1

Note: **p < 0.01 (1-tailed).

4.3 Regression Analysis

Two regression models were tested:

- **Model 1:** Four independent variables (FQ, SLF, CP, AW) predicting PI.
- **Model 2:** Overall consumer attitude (AT) predicting PI.

Table 3. Regression Model Summaries

Model	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Std. Error
Model 1 (FQ, SLF, CP, AW → PI)	0.271	0.073	0.070	1.021
Model 2 (AT → PI)	0.956	0.914	0.914	0.311

Model 1 explained 7.3% of the variance in PI, indicating that the four determinants alone have limited predictive power. However, Model 2 showed that overall attitude explains 91.4% of the variance, suggesting it is the strongest predictor of purchase intention.

4.4 ANOVA Results

The regression model was statistically significant ($F = 19.68, p < 0.001$), confirming that the predictors collectively influence purchase intention.

Table 4. ANOVA (Model 1)

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	82.06	4	20.52	19.68	.000
Residual	1037	995	1.04		
Total	1119	999			

4.5 Coefficients Analysis

Table 5 reports the standardized coefficients. FQ and SLF significantly and positively influenced PI, while AW had a significant negative effect. CP was not significant. Attitude (AT) was the strongest predictor overall.

Table 5. Regression Coefficients

Predictor	β (Unstandardized)	Std. Error	β (Standardized)	t	Sig.
Constant	1.970	0.230	–	8.559	.000
Food Quality (FQ)	0.219	0.034	0.197	6.345	.000
Supporting Local Farmers (SLF)	0.258	0.047	0.173	5.481	.000
Convenience & Price (CP)	0.027	0.038	0.023	0.712	.476
Animal Welfare (AW)	–0.103	0.035	–0.098	–2.930	.003
Attitude (AT)	0.937	0.009	0.956	102.734	.000

Hypotheses Testing

- **H1 (FQ has no effect on PI):** Rejected. Food quality positively affects PI.
- **H2 (SLF has no effect on PI):** Rejected. Supporting local farmers positively affects PI.
- **H3 (CP has no effect on PI):** Accepted. Convenience/price not significant.
- **H4 (AW has no effect on PI):** Rejected. Animal welfare negatively affects PI.
- **H5 (AT has no effect on PI):** Rejected. Attitude strongly predicts PI.

5. Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine four determinants—food quality (FQ), support for local farmers (SLF), convenience/affordability (CP), and animal welfare (AW)—in predicting consumer purchase intentions (PI) toward organic food in Lucknow and Greater Noida, with consumer attitude (AT) assessed as an overarching predictor. The results provide several important insights, both supporting and challenging prior research.

5.1 Food Quality (H1)

The findings show that food quality positively and significantly influences purchase intention, leading to the rejection of H1. This result aligns with earlier research indicating that Indian consumers strongly associate organic food with superior freshness, taste, and safety (Gupta, 2019; Basha & Lal, 2019). Similar studies in international contexts have also highlighted health consciousness and perceived quality as central to organic food adoption (Chen, 2007; Singh et al.,

2025). Thus, food quality remains the most consistent predictor across cultural and geographic contexts, underscoring its primacy in consumer decision-making.

5.2 Supporting Local Farmers (H2)

Contrary to initial assumptions, SLF was found to positively and significantly influence purchase intention, leading to the rejection of H2. This outcome confirms prior evidence that Indian consumers increasingly perceive organic purchases as a way to support rural livelihoods and community well-being (Basha & Lal, 2019; Selvaraj et al., 2024). Similar trends have been observed internationally, where locally produced organic food is perceived as fresher and more trustworthy (Pugliese et al., 2013; Sirieix et al., 2011). This suggests that socio-economic solidarity is emerging as a relevant driver of organic food demand in urban India.

5.3 Convenience and Price (H3)

The results reveal that CP is not significantly associated with purchase intention, leading to the acceptance of H3. This finding diverges from many prior studies in both developed and emerging markets, which reported affordability and accessibility as key determinants of organic consumption (Hjelmar, 2011; Gottschalk & Leistner, 2013; Kavaliauske & Ubartaute, 2014). One possible explanation is that consumers in Lucknow and Greater Noida may already expect organic food to be costlier and less convenient, but are willing to overlook these disadvantages when convinced of the product's quality or social benefits. This aligns with Kamboj et al. (2023), who found that functional value and trust can mitigate affordability concerns in Indian markets.

5.4 Animal Welfare (H4)

Unexpectedly, AW exerted a significant negative effect on purchase intention, leading to the rejection of H4. This result contrasts with Western literature that highlights ethical concerns and animal rights as key motivators (Hamzaoui-Essoussi & Zahaf, 2009; Bazhan et al., 2024). In the Indian context, however, consumers appear to prioritize health and socio-economic benefits over animal welfare. Cultural explanations may include limited awareness of organic livestock

standards or a greater focus on household well-being given modest average incomes. This finding highlights the need for further exploration of cultural and contextual moderators in ethical consumption research.

5.6 Consumer Attitude (H5)

The study also demonstrates that overall consumer attitude is a dominant predictor of purchase intention, explaining more than 90% of the variance. This leads to the rejection of H5 and supports theories such as the Theory of Planned Behavior, which emphasize attitude as a core determinant of intention (Ajzen, 1991; Selvaraj et al., 2024). The strength of this relationship suggests that while individual attributes (quality, affordability, ethics) shape perceptions, it is consumers' overall evaluative stance toward organic food that ultimately drives purchase intention.

5.7 Theoretical Implications

These findings contribute to organic food literature by clarifying the relative importance of functional, socio-economic, and ethical determinants in an Indian urban context. Specifically, they highlight that:

- Functional (FQ) and socio-economic (SLF) factors are strong motivators.
- Ethical considerations (AW) may not translate into behavioral intentions in emerging markets.
- Overall consumer attitude (AT) is a more powerful predictor than individual attributes.

6. Practical Implications

For policymakers, the results underscore the importance of strengthening certification systems and quality assurance to reinforce consumer trust in organic products. Marketers should highlight product quality and community benefits in promotional campaigns, rather than focusing solely on price or ethical claims. Farmers and retailers may also benefit from positioning organic food as

both healthier and socially supportive, thereby tapping into urban consumers' dual concerns for well-being and community development.

7. Conclusion

This study examined the determinants of organic food purchase intention among consumers in Lucknow and Greater Noida, focusing on food quality, support for local farmers, convenience/affordability, and animal welfare, with consumer attitude as an overarching predictor. The results highlight that food quality and socio-economic solidarity with local farmers significantly enhance purchase intentions, while animal welfare exerts a negative influence and price/convenience concerns remain insignificant. Most notably, overall consumer attitude emerged as the strongest predictor, explaining more than 90% of the variance in purchase intention.

These findings make three contributions to the literature. First, they reaffirm the primacy of quality perceptions in shaping organic food demand in India. Second, they reveal the increasing importance of socio-economic considerations such as supporting local farmers, a factor often overlooked in prior Indian studies. Third, they demonstrate that ethical concerns, such as animal welfare, may not resonate strongly with consumers in emerging markets, suggesting a divergence from Western consumption patterns.

From a practical perspective, policymakers and marketers should prioritize strategies that enhance perceptions of product quality and highlight the community benefits of organic food. Certification systems, awareness campaigns, and marketing narratives that emphasize health, safety, and local farmer support are likely to resonate most effectively with urban Indian consumers. Future research should extend this work by incorporating additional determinants such as trust in certification, environmental awareness, and cultural values, while also exploring diverse geographic regions beyond North India to enhance generalizability.

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