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Factors Influencing Consumer Behaviour Towards Organic Food in Nepal

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Abstract

This study examines consumer behaviour regarding organic food in Nepal, focusing on three key factors: health consciousness, availability, and price perception. This study attempts to identify the determinants of consumer attitude, purchase intention, and actual buying behaviour that will help address the challenges faced by Nepal's emerging organic food market. A quantitative approach was used to prepare a structured questionnaire distributed to 650 participants, and 500 valid responses were analysed. The data were collected using both online and offline methods. The results showed that health consciousness significantly influences attitudes and purchase intentions because consumers perceive organic foods to be healthier, non-contaminated, and without harmful chemicals. Availability has emerged as a vital factor because of the limited accessibility of organic products and the low diffusion results. As perceived, negative purchase intentions consider consumers' attitudes toward the expensiveness of organic products regarding perceived benefits. High prices and restricted availability are considered reasons for the difference between purchase intention and actual buying behaviour. Research has highlighted that access to and affordability of organic foods in Nepal must be strategized to improve distribution channels, educate consumers, and adjust prices to permit wider adoption.

Keywords: Organic food, consumer behaviour, health consciousness, availability, price perception

Introduction

Background of the Study

Growing consumer preferences for organic food and changing values relating to health, environmental sustainability, and ethical production practices have led to an increasing global demand for organic food. Organic foods are simply grown or processed without synthetic pesticides or chemical fertilisers, such as herbicides, insecticides, and irradiation. Organic products are certified to meet strict standards for ecologically balanced farming, such as maintaining biodiversity, developing soil fertility, and reducing pollution (Meena et. el, 2023). Animal products such as milk, eggs, and meat have organic standards, including a ban on antibiotics and growth hormones, humane treatment, and sustainable animal production methods. An increasing trend towards organic products is based on perceptions related to health, nutrition content, and environmentally friendly organic products compared to conventional products (Koswatta et al., 2023).

Organic foods are mostly consumed in agricultural countries such as Nepal. Traditional farming methods are practiced in Nepalese agriculture. Nepal is relatively new to organic farming, based on certification and market-oriented approaches (Paudel et al., 2024). The organic food market in Nepal remains in its infancy. One could predict that it will grow due to factors such as growing health consciousness, rising awareness of environmental problems, and

a shift in consumption patterns. However, there are several obstacles, such as underdeveloped infrastructure, general non-diffusion of consumer awareness, and poor development of certification mechanisms against these opportunities (Galvin, 2021). This is further aggravated by restricted product availability in local markets, the high prices of organics perceived by consumers, and barriers to accessing a wider range of demographics.

In this respect, three vital components—health consciousness, availability, and price perception— must be considered when understanding the dynamics of Nepal's organic food market. Conscious health has become a significant phenomenon in the induction of consumer behaviour because organic products are normally associated with no chemicals and are generally healthy. (2021). Availability also plays a crucial role in shaping buying behaviour, as the absence of valid distribution channels for organic food items may discourage potential buyers. (2023). Finally, price perception is an important driver of buying decisions in Nepal because affordability is a salient determinant of purchasing intentions, considering that organic products are usually sold at premium prices in the organic market (Sharma, 2024).

Research Questions

a. What are the factors that effects consumer behaviour towards organic food?
b. Which factor has the maximum effect on the consumer behaviour towards organic food?

Objective of the Study

a. To examine the factors that effects consumer behaviour towards organic food.
b. To investigate factors that have the maximum effect on consumer behaviour towards organic food.

Literature Review

Understanding the factors that may influence consumer behaviour toward organic foods is crucial for designing appropriate strategies for increasing adoption rates. Guided by previous related studies and the theoretical framework, this study focuses on three pivotal elements–health consciousness, availability, and price perception–in determining their effects on consumer attitudes and purchase intentions.

Health Consciousness (HC)

Health consciousness refers to the degree of awareness and concern a person has for his or her physical health. This is one of the major factors that affects consumer behaviour, especially food consumption decisions (Hoek et al., 2021). Organically grown foods are thought to be healthier than conventional foods because they do not use synthetic chemicals, pesticides, or genetically modified organisms (Durbul et al., 2021). Organic products are viewed as investments in future well-being by health-conscious consumers, who believe that products reduce the risk of chronic diseases and have higher nutritional value. Lifestyle

diseases and environmental health hazards are becoming more prevalent in Nepal, causing more time for organic food consumption (Rokaya, 2024).

This study hypothesises the following:

H_1: Health consciousness has a positive impact on consumers' attitudes towards organic food.

Availability (AV)

Availability is a critical determinant of consumer behaviour as it directly affects the ease with which consumers can access and purchase products. Barriers related to a lack of distribution channels, inconsistent supply, and lack of local food market visibility when consuming organic food limit its use (Górska-Warsewicz et al., 2021). Moreover, in developing countries such as Nepal, where the market infrastructure is yet to develop, the convenience of buying organic food has played a very persuasive role in bringing about changes in consumers' purchase decisions (Rokaya & Pandey, 2024). It has been indicated that improving organic product availability through retail expansion and localised distribution may positively impact consumer behaviour. Thus, based on the above understanding, the following hypothesis is proposed.

H_2: The availability of organic food positively influences consumer attitudes towards purchases.

Price Perception (PP)

In markets where organic products are sold at a price higher than that of conventional products, price perception plays an important role in determining consumer behaviour. Although consumers find organic products desirable, their high costs impede their purchases (Raj et al., 2024). Price sensitivity is an important issue in Nepal because of income disparities and limited disposable income, which influence people's buying behaviour. However, some consumers are willing to pay a premium for organic products driven by perceived health and environmental benefits (Raj et al., 2024). This dichotomy underscores the importance of balancing pricing strategies to meet consumer expectations while ensuring market competitiveness. Accordingly, this study hypothesises the following:

H_3: Price perception negatively effects consumers' attitudes towards organic food.

By focusing on these three constructs, this study aims to provide actionable insights into the factors influencing consumer behaviour towards organic foods. These hypotheses were tested through empirical analysis to evaluate their relevance in Nepal's organic food market.

Purchase Intention and Actual Purchasing Behaviour

The relationship between purchase intention and actual buying behaviour has been the focus of research on consumer behaviour, particularly regarding organic food. Purchase intention refers to consumers' willingness or planned decision to buy a product based on their attitudes, beliefs,

and perceived benefits. Actual buying behaviour represents the final action of purchasing a product, which may or may not be consistent with the consumer's initial intention (Bläse et al., 2024).

Intention to buy is a major driver of actual purchase behaviour and results from various factors, such as health consciousness, availability of products, and price perception. Highly health-conscious consumers would have more favourable purchase intentions for organic foods because they believe that organic foods are good for their general health (Bazhan et al., 2024). Similarly, the easy accessibility of organic production places increases purchase intention because it decreases the search cost and effort required by customers (Zhao, 2024). The high price of organic food lowers the purchase intention. In addition, for countries such as Nepal, where affordability is a crucial factor, high prices have become a strong barrier to purchasing organic food items (Guragain, 2024).

Although purchase intention strongly determines consumer behaviour, it does not always translate into actual consumption (Khan et al., 2023). This gap, described as the attitude–behaviour gap, is said to be influenced by practical barriers such as product availability, perceived value for money, and social norms. Even consumers with positive attitudes and high purchase intentions may fail to translate these attitudes and intentions into actual buying behaviour if they face obstacles, such as limited availability or high prices. This gap is more pronounced in Nepal because of the infrastructural challenges and income disparities.

Based on these insights, the following hypotheses are proposed to examine the interplay between purchase intention and actual buying behaviour.

H_4: Consumer attitudes positively effects purchase intention.

H_5: Purchase intention positively effects actual buying behaviour (ABB) towards organic food.

By testing these hypotheses, this study aims to bridge the gap between consumer attitudes, purchase intentions, and actual buying behaviour, providing insights into how to enhance the adoption of organic food in Nepal.

Materials and Methods

The research methodology adopted for this study closely follows the framework employed in the referenced study, with the exception of fitting to a specific context and scope. This study addressed the factors which affect consumer attitude, purchase intention, and actual buying behaviour of organic food in Nepal using a quantitative approach related to health consciousness, availability, and perception of price.

A structured questionnaire adapted from previous studies for analysis but modified for this research sourced the data. There were two parts to the survey. The first part comprised

attitudes, purchase intentions, and buying behaviour towards organic food, using a 5 point Likert scale (Strongly Disagree–Strongly Agree). The same section contained items that measured three constructs: health consciousness, availability, and price perception. The second section consisted of demographic information on age, gender, education, and income, to study the influence of sociodemographic factors on organic food consumption.

The research questionnaire was pretested for clarity and relevance among a pilot group of 55 respondents, and some questions were subjected to minor phrasing revisions. Convenience and snowball sampling techniques were used to capture maximum variability in the main survey. Actual data were collected between July and September 2024 using both online and offline procedures. Participants were recruited from a wide network, including social media platforms and community organisations, to capture the largest number of Nepalese consumers. A total of 650 questionnaires were distributed, of which 500 were valid and complete responses were available for analysis. The final sample had a heterogeneous demographic profile in terms of age, sex, education, and income. The sample size was sufficient to ensure robustness of the statistical analysis; however, the scope was limited.

Data analysis involved the use of descriptive and inferential statistical methods. For this reason, the validity and reliability of the constructs by Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) and Bartlett's test of sphericity were performed first to assess the suitability of the data. Multiple linear regression analysis was used to examine the influence of health awareness, availability, perceived price, and consumer attitudes on purchase intention. In addition, hierarchical regression was used to test the practical impact of consumer attitude on the mediation of purchase intentions and, finally, on purchasing behaviour. This study provides a comprehensive framework through which organic food consumption in Nepal can be assessed, to derive actionable insights into market development and consumer engagement.

Table 1

Scales for Measuring Variables in the Study

Variable	Code	Evaluation Statement	Source
Health Consciousness	HC1	I am aware of the health benefits of consuming organic food.	Hoek et al. (2021); Durbul et al. (2021)
	HC2	I prefer organic foods because they are free from harmful chemicals.	Rokaya & Pandey (2024)
	HC3	I believe organic food is healthier than conventional food.	Hoek et al. (2021); Rokaya & Pandey (2024)

Variable	Code	Evaluation Statement	Source
Availability	AV1	Organic food products are easily available in local markets.	Górska-Warsewicz et al. (2021)
	AV2	I find it convenient to purchase organic food.	Rokaya & Pandey (2024)
Price Perception	PP1	The price of organic food is affordable for me.	Raj, Rai, & Jasrotia (2024)
	PP2	Organic food is too expensive compared to its benefits.	Raj, Rai, & Jasrotia (2024)
Attitude	AT1	I have a positive attitude towards purchasing organic food.	Khan et al. (2023); Ajzen (1991) (Theory of Planned Behaviour)
	AT2	Organic food aligns with my values and preferences.	Khan et al. (2023); Ajzen (1991)
	AT3	I feel confident in choosing organic food over conventional food.	Khan et al. (2023); Ajzen (1991)
Purchase Intention	PI1	I plan to buy organic food products in the near future.	Bläse et al. (2024); Zhao (2024)
	PI2	I am willing to pay more for organic food.	Bazhan et al. (2024)
	PI3	I prefer organic food for my daily consumption.	Bazhan et al. (2024); Zhao (2024)
Actual Buying Behaviour	ABB1	I regularly purchase organic food products.	Khan et al. (2023); Guragain (2024)
	ABB2	I choose organic food even when conventional food is cheaper.	Khan et al. (2023)
	ABB3	My shopping habits include organic food products.	Guragain (2024)

Results and Discussion

This study analysed the responses of 500 people to determine what drives consumer attitudes, purchase intentions, and actual buying behaviour toward organic food in Nepal. The analysis focuses on three key components: availability, price perception, and health consciousness. Sociodemographic factors were also used to examine consumer behaviour.

Respondent Demographics

The demographic profile of the sample (N = 500) revealed a balanced representation of various sociodemographic variables. Approximately 48% of the respondents were male and 52% were female. Age distribution was categorised into four groups: < 25 years (34%), 25–34

years (29%), 35–44 years (21%), and > 44 years (16%). Educational qualifications ranged from secondary education (19%) to postgraduate education or higher (41%), with the remainder having completed their undergraduate degree. Income levels were distributed as low (< NPR 25,000), medium (NPR 25,001–55,000), and high (> NPR 55,001), accounting for 9, 56, and 34% of the sample, respectively. The mean scores and standard deviations for key components—health consciousness (M = 4.20, SD = 1.02), price perception (M = 3.95, SD = 0.98), availability (M = 3.8, SD = 0.92), purchase intention (M = 4.1, SD = 0.7), and actual buying behaviour (M = 3.9, SD = 0.8)—indicated moderate to high levels of awareness, intention, and behaviour regarding organic food consumption.

Table 1

Demographic of Respondents

Characteristic	N (%)	Characteristic	N (%)
Gender		Family Size	
Male	220 (44)	1–2	150 (30)
Female	280 (56)	3–4	230 (46)
		5 or more	120 (24)
Age		Annual Income (NPR)	
18–30 years	90 (18)	Less than 25,000	45 (9)
31–40 years	190 (38)	25,001–40,000	125 (25)
41–50 years	120 (24)	40,001–55,000	155 (31)
51–60 years	70 (14)	55,001-70,000	130 (26)
Above 60 years	30 (6)	Above 70,001	45(9)
Education		Occupation	
High school	75 (15)	Student	90 (18)
Undergraduate	145 (29)	Employed full-time	230 (46)
Graduate	180 (36)	Self-employed	120 (24)
Postgraduate/PhD	100 (20)	Retired	60 (12)

Reasons for Purchasing Organic Food

The respondents were asked about their motivations for purchasing organic food (Table 2). Health consciousness was the most frequently cited reason, with 50% of respondents identifying it as their primary motivation. Pesticide-free production (20%) and environmental sustainability (15%) are also significant factors. A smaller percentage of participants emphasised the freshness and taste of organic products. Table 2 summarises the reasons for purchasing organic food.

Table 2

Reason for Purchasing Organic Foods

Reason for Purchase	Percentage (%)
Health consciousness	50

Reason for Purchase	Percentage (%)
Pesticide-free production	20
Environmentally friendly	15
Freshness	10
Taste	5

Factor analysis results validated the reliability and internal consistency of the constructs used in this study. According to Ab Hamid, Sami, and Sidek (2017), a factor loading of 0.60 or higher is considered the minimum acceptable threshold for construct validity, while Tavakol and Dennick (2011) recommend Cronbach's alpha values above 0.70 for internal consistency. In this analysis, all constructs exceeded these thresholds, thus demonstrating robust reliability. Constructs such as health consciousness did rise to become major constructs with factor loadings from 0.77 to 0.81. These results demonstrate that consumer awareness of and concern about health in consumer attitudes toward organic food are well defined by health consciousness. The availability of organic food also showed high reliability (Cronbach's α = 0.76) and factor loadings between 0.78 and 0.83, highlighting the importance of access to organic products in shaping consumer attitudes.

Price perception achieved a Cronbach's alpha of 0.84, indicating strong internal consistency, while its factor loadings (0.81–0.84) further validated its role in influencing attitudes toward organic food. Attitude, central to the theoretical framework, exhibited high factor loadings (0.78–0.83) and a Cronbach's alpha of 0.83, affirming its mediating role between influencing factors and purchase intention. Purchase intention (Cronbach's α = 0.81) and actual buying behaviour (Cronbach's α = 0.80) also demonstrated strong reliability, with factor loadings ranging from 0.72 to 0.92. These findings align with the theory of planned behaviour (Ajzen, 1991), which suggests that attitudes shaped by external factors such as health consciousness, availability, and price perception influence purchase intentions and actual behaviour. By meeting the minimum thresholds for factor loading and Cronbach's alpha, the constructs validated the reliability of the measurement model and provided empirical support for the theoretical framework underpinning this study.

Table 2

Constructs, Observable Items, and Factor Loadings

Construct	Indicator	Factor Loadings (λ)	Cronbachα	Variance (%)
Health Consciousness			0.76	36.12
	HC1	0.80		
	HC2	0.77		
	HC3	0.81		
Availability of Organic Food			0.76	3.86

Construct	Indicator	Factor Loadings (λ)	Cronbachα	Variance (%)
	AV1	0.83		
	AV2	0.78		
Price Perception			0.84	4.82
	PP1	0.84		
	PP2	0.81		
Attitude			0.83	3.38
	AT1	0.82		
	AT2	0.78		
	AT3	0.83		
Purchase Intention			0.81	2.26
	PI1	0.92		
	PI2	0.79		
	PI3	0.85		
Actual Buying Behavior			0.80	1.73
	ABB1	0.89		
	ABB2	0.72		
	ABB3	0.85		

SPSS and AMOS were used to analyse the correlation matrix (Table 3) and path analysis results (Table 4). A strong positive relationship was detected between the constructs, as indicated in the correlation matrix (Table 3). The highest correlation was found between HIC (0.812) and AT (0.793), indicating that HC had a tendency to influence AT and PI. The availability of Organic Food (AV) correlates strongly with attitude (AT) (0.840) and actual buying behaviour (ABB) (0.834), showing that availability has a strong effect on attitudes and purchasing behaviour. As shown in Table 3, Price Perception (PP) has moderate correlations, the highest being with attitude (AT) (0.694); thus, Price Perception moderately affects attitude. Correlations were also strong between Attitude (AT), Purchase Intention (PI) (0.775), and that between Attitude (AT) and Actual Buying Behaviour (ABB) (0.780), indicating a strong influence of attitudes on purchase intentions and actual behaviour.

All hypotheses (H1-H5) are supported by the path analysis outcomes (Table 4) because all significant relationships were confirmed. For instance, in the case of the linear path from Health Consciousness (HC) to attitude (AT), ($\beta = 0.35$, $t = 5.15$, $p = 0.014$) represents a significant positive effect. Significant results were found for the path from availability (AV) to attitude (AT) ($\beta = 0.44$, t-value = 4.94, $p = 0.0001$). Similar paths from Price Perception (PP) to attitude (AT) ($\beta = 0.32$, $t = 3.56$, $p = 0.012$) and attitude (AT) to Purchase Intention (PI) ($\beta = 0.41$, $t = 5.86$, $p = 0.001$) were also significant. Finally, Purchase Intention (PI) is highly correlated with Actual Buying Behaviour (ABB), with $\beta = 0.24$, t-value = 4.00, and p-value = 0.020. This confirms that these constructs play a crucial role in consumer behaviour.

Table 3

Correlation Matrix of Constructs

	HC	AV	PP	AT	PI	ABB
HC	1.00	0.721	0.668	0.812	0.793	0.785
AV	0.721	1.00	0.725	0.840	0.771	0.834
PP	0.668	0.725	1.00	0.694	0.700	0.710
AT	0.812	0.840	0.694	1.00	0.775	0.780
PI	0.793	0.771	0.700	0.775	1.00	0.784
ABB	0.785	0.834	0.710	0.780	0.784	1.00

Table 4

Path Analysis Outcomes with Hypotheses and Remarks

Path	β	SE	t-value	p-value	Hypothesis	Remarks
HC → AT	0.35	0.05	5.15	0.014	H1	Supported
AV → AT	0.44	0.10	4.94	0.0001	H2	Supported
PP → AT	0.32	0.14	3.56	0.012	H3	Supported
AT → PI	0.41	0.07	5.86	0.001	H4	Supported
PI → ABB	0.24	0.06	4.00	0.020	H5	Supported

The results of this study agree with the existing literature on organic food behaviour, especially when examining the effects of health consciousness, availability, price perception, and attitude. Health consciousness has a strong positive relationship with attitude and purchase intention, confirming the results of Su et al. (2022), in which health-conscious consumers show a more positive attitude with an increasing intention to buy organic products. Further, path analysis confirmed that health consciousness significantly influences attitude and corroborated a series by Ajzen (1991) in that health-conscious consumers are more likely to perform behaviours regarded as consistent with their health beliefs.

Attitude and actual buying behaviour are highly influenced by the availability of organic food (Paul and Rana, 2012), where increased availability has a positive influence on consumers' attitudes and purchasing decisions. The correlation between AV and ABB, which is 0.834, also supports the idea that if organic food is more accessible to consumers, they are bound to purchase it. Price Perception (PP) was moderately correlated with Attitude and Purchase Intention, with a weaker impact than health consciousness and availability. This finding concurs with Chen (2007), who suggested that, while price is important, it is often less influential than health and availability in the organic food market. While models of consumer

behaviour recognise price sensitivity, the present study underlines the dominant role of other factors in driving purchase intentions.

The strong relation of AT to PI is in support of the Theory of Planned Behavior by Ajzen (1991), where positive attitudes result in stronger purchase intentions. The path from PI to ABB follows Sheppard et al. (1988), with the intention of being a strong predictor of actual behaviour, although the effect size was smaller than that of the other paths, as can be seen from the β value of 0.24.

Conclusion

In general, the results are not at odds with the existing literature, confirming health consciousness and availability of the product as relevant drivers for organic consumption, whereas the role played by price perception is related to a second-order impact. Further studies should explore these dynamics across demographic segments or across time to ensure that the obtained findings are more robust.

This study investigated the factors influencing consumer behaviour towards organic food in Nepal, focusing on health consciousness, availability, and price perceptions. Research has revealed that health consciousness is the strongest motivator for consumers' attitudes and purchase intentions, with many associating organic foods with better health outcomes. This also depends on availability; the limited availability of organic food in local markets may not encourage people to buy food. On the other hand, price perception has a negative influence on purchase intention since organic food is perceived as expensive in relation to the perceived benefit from consumption.

The findings of this study highlight that, while health consciousness and availability positively influence attitudes and purchasing intentions, price perception hinders consumers' adoption of organic food. Additionally, the gap between purchase intention and actual buying behaviour, largely due to price and availability barriers, further complicates market growth.

This study has pointed out many of its limitations, from convenience and snowball sampling methods that could not correctly represent the heterogeneity within the Nepalese population to a small sample size and limited geographical coverage, which may not allow for the generalisation of the findings to the whole country. Other limitations could arise in terms of biases associated with self-reported data in terms of overestimation of stated intentions or attitudes toward organic food.

Future studies may, therefore, be directed at analysing the influence of socio-cultural factors on organic food consumption in Nepal, taking into consideration regional differences and cultural attitudes toward food. This study can be longitudinal; consumer behaviour may change over time as the organic food market in Nepal matures. In addition, how government policies, marketing strategies, and consumer education might surmount deterrents to the

adoption of organic foods should be investigated in order to inform market development strategies.

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