



Identifying the factors influencing intention to purchase organic food and their relevance with time

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ABSTRACT

During the last few decades, demand for organic food has increased globally. Consequently, academic interest in understanding the different factors affecting organic food consumption has also increased. But, the scope of the previous studies is both broad and fragmented. There is an absence of a study that identifies the most important factors affecting the intention to purchase organic and changing relevance of these factors with time. The current study, on the basis of review of past studies, identifies the most important factors affecting the intention to purchase organic and identifies changing pattern of these factors with time. A total of 109 empirical studies were considered in this study. The primary outcomes of this research paper are: a) identification of the most important factors influencing intention to purchase organic food; b) changing relevance of these factors with time; c) implications for scholars and policymakers interested in understanding issues regarding organic food consumption.

Introduction

With the present trend of increased consumption of organic food, the need is felt to understand the important factors influencing intention to purchase. The number of research studies on the intention to

purchase organic food is increasing. An extensive review of literature has reported different factors influencing the intention to purchase organic food, such as health, environment, trust, hedonism, and self-identity. The relative importance of these factors also varied across time. There is an absence of a study that iden-

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tifies the most important factors affecting the intention to purchase organic and changing relevance of these factors with time. To improve the understanding of organic food consumption, a review of studies is required to identify the important factors behind the intention to purchase organic food (Kushwah, Dhir, Sagar, et al., 2019). The current study examines important factors influencing intention to purchase based on the review of research studies conducted in the last decade. It will offer helpful insights to each, both researchers and marketers. This article can be used by scholars to understand the factors which are more important and their changing relevance along with the time. Also, marketers can use the results of this review to understand the emerging factors affecting intention to purchase which will guide them to target organic food consumers.

The structure of the article will be as follows: Section 2 deals with literature review. Section 3 deals with the objectives of the study. Section 4 focuses on the research method used to search the relevant studies for the article. Section 5 presents findings of the study. Lastly, sections 6 and 7 deal with the conclusion and implications respectively.

Literature Review

Organic food

According to the Food and Agricultural Organisation of the United Nations (FAO), organic food refers to 'food produced through a process characterised by mandatory 'soil building' crop rotation and absence of synthetic inputs'. Organic food includes those natural food items which do not include artificial chemicals such as fertilizers, pesticides, herbicides, antibiotics, and genetically modified organisms and are not subjected to irradiation (Rana & Paul, 2017).

Intention to purchase

The purchase intention is an important predictor of consumer buying behavior and acts as a prerequisite for the real buying attitude (Watanabe et al., 2020). To target the consumers of organic food, we need to develop an under-

standing of those factors, which influence the intention of organic food consumers (Rana & Paul, 2017).

Objectives of the Study

The main research objectives of the study can be classified as: First, to identify important factors affecting the intention to purchase organic food. Second, to find out the relevance of these factors along with time. Third, to provide future implications for scholars and marketers interested in the domain of organic food.

Research Methodology

The literature review approach has been adopted to identify important factors affecting the intention to purchase organic food. The key aim of the study is to find the most important factors behind organic food consumption and their changing relevance. In the present study, author conducted a broad search for studies focusing on the intention to purchase organic food and used the following steps: planning of review (research questions) (4.1), inclusion and exclusion criteria (4.2), selection of databases (4.3), data abstraction (4.4).

Research questions

The current study aims to answer two main research questions (RQ). RQ1. What are most important factors affecting the intention to purchase organic food? RQ2. How did the relevance of factors affecting the intention to purchase organic food change with time?

Inclusion and exclusion criteria

Inclusion criteria

This study utilised five different inclusion criteria:

1. Studies should focus on the intention to purchase in the context of organic food, 2) studies published during 2011-2020, 3) studies published in the English language, 4) only peer-reviewed journal articles, 5) factors influencing intention to purchase were empirically measured.

Exclusion criteria

This study utilised three exclusion criteria:

1) relevance, 2) review, conference papers and thesis dissertations were ignored, and 3) duplicate studies.

Databases

The study utilises academic databases SCOPUS and Web of Science. This search resulted in 109 results from Scopus and Web of Science.

Data abstraction and synthesis

The data from the 109 research studies reviewed were analysed, and data on various aspects such as the theoretical framework used in the study, research method, and findings, were extracted. Next, the key factors affecting the intention to purchase organic food were identified.

Findings of the Study

Publication timeline

There are total of 109 studies in the period between 2011 and 2020. This period is classified into 4 phases as given in table no. 1.

Table 1: Total no. of studies in different time phases

TIME PHASE	YEAR	NO. OF STUDIES
Phase I	2011-2015	26
Phase II	2016-2018	28
Phase III	2019	26
Phase IV	2020	29
TOTAL	10	109

5.1.1 First Phase (2011- 2015)

During this phase, the number of studies increased continuously (except 2013) from 2011-2015 with 2, 5, 4, 7, and 8 no. of studies in the years 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014 and 2015 respectively.

5.1.2 Second Phase (2016-2018)

During this phase, the number of studies decreased continuously from 2016-2018 with 12 studies in 2016, 9 in 2017 and only 7 in 2018.

5.1.3 Third Phase (2019)

In this phase, there is a steep increase in the number of studies (26).

5.1.4 Fourth Phase (2020)

In this phase, number of studies increased to 29 (the highest in the decade).

Important factors influencing intention to purchase organic food and their relevance with time

The list of papers chosen for this study was scrutinised to determine the different factors underlying organic food consumption. The top 10 factors affecting intention to purchase as identified in studies are: attitude (54), subjective norms (30), Perceived behavioural control (22), health(22), environment(18), trust(13) hedonism (7), self-identity(6), quality(6), food safety(6). The rest of the factors occurred five or lesser times in studies (2011-2020).

Attitude

Attitude is the most important factor with 54 studies finding its influence on intention to purchase. Attitude can be defined as the “favourable or unfavourable idea towards conducting certain behaviour” (Ajzen, 1991). This factor is present in all four phases and its number is increasing along with time.

Subjective norms

Subjective norms is the most important factor after attitude in ten year period from 2011-2020. Ajzen (1991) defined subjective norms as “perceived social pressure to perform or not perform the behaviour”. Subjective norms too have a presence in all the four phases but

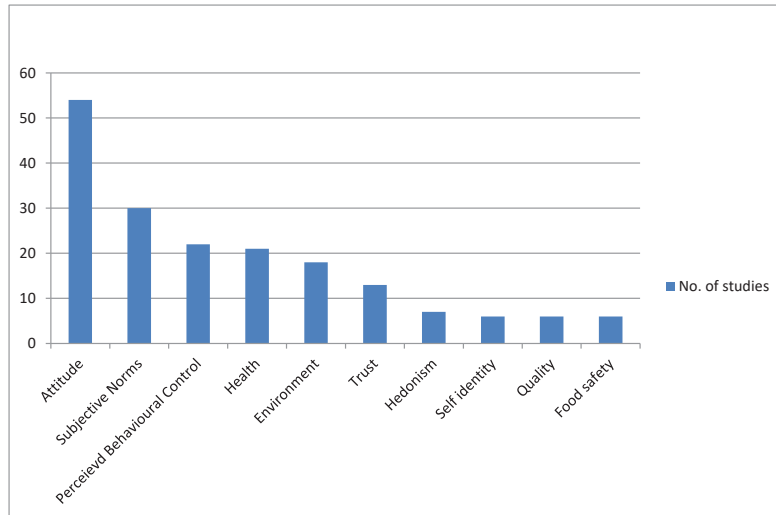


Fig. 1: Top 10 factors affecting intention to purchase

their number decline in the third phase but increases in the fourth.

Perceived behavioural control

Perceived Behavioural Control is the third most important factor influencing intention to purchase organic food in the last decade. Perceived Behavioural Control is defined as “an individual perceived ease or difficulty of performing the particular behaviour” (Ajzen, 1991). Perceived Behavioural Control is the third most important factor with its number decreasing in the second phase but increasing in the third and fourth phases.

Health

After the above three determinants (given by Icek Ajzen in the theory of planned behavior), health is an important factor influencing the intention to purchase organic food. Health consciousness means “the degree to which health concerns are integrated into a person’s daily activities” (Jayanti and Burns, 1998). The presence of health is near constant in almost every phase.

Environment

Environmental consciousness means consumers’ awareness of problems related to the environment and

their willingness to contribute to the solution of these (Prakash et al. 2018). This is the fifth most important factor after health but its presence is decreasing in the second and third phase and remaining constant in the fourth.

5.2.6 Trust

Trust is the sixth most important factor influencing the intention to purchase organic food. Trust can be described as “feelings, beliefs or expectations of loyalty” (Mohammed, 2020). The presence of trust increases in the second and third phases but decreased in the fourth.

Hedonism

Hedonism can be defined as feelings of pleasure and sensuous gratification (Aertsens et al., 2009). Studies found hedonism as the seventh most important factor influencing consumers’ intention. Hedonism decreased in the second phase with no presence at all but increased in the third and remain constant in the fourth phase.

Self-identity

Self-identity is interpreted as “a label that people use to describe themselves” (Cook et al., 2002). The first phase has 1 study finding self-identity as a significant factor

influencing intention to purchase with an increase of 1 study in the second phase. In the third phase, it is not present at all and its number raise to 3 in the fourth phase.

Quality

Quality refers to the reward for money spent that buyers perceive that they are getting from buying their organic product (Basha and Lal, 2019). Quality remains constant in the second and fourth phases with a decrease in the third phase from 2 to 1.

Food safety

“Food safety concern” relates organic food with safety from chemical residues and additives present in food that could affect their physical health. (Hsu et al., 2016). Food Safety decreased in the second phase and increased in the third and fourth phases.

Most important factors in 4-time phases

First Phase (2011- 2015) Attitude is the most important factor followed by the environment in this phase. Subjective norms and perceived behavioral control both are the third most important factors.

5.3.2 Second Phase (2016-2018) Attitude is the most important factor followed by subjective norms and health in order.

Third Phase (2019) Attitude is the most important factor followed by health and trust.

Fourth Phase (2020) Attitude is the most important factor followed by subjective norms and perceived behavioral control in order.

Conclusions

This study identifies attitude as the most important factor followed by subjective norms and perceived behavioral control in influencing consumers' intention toward organic food. The current study is one of the first comprehensive reviews of factors influencing consumers' intention to purchase. The review suggests that the number of empirical studies related to organic food consumption has risen sharply in the past decade, indicating an increasing interest in organic food globally. This study evaluated the selected 109 studies to identify changing patterns of factors with time. Attitude emerged as the single factor whose presence increased in all the phases.

Implications

The current study has the following theoretical and practical implications.

Theoretical implications

The findings of the current study identify factors influencing the intention of consumers in organic food purchases. The primary theoretical implications are: First, the study identified factors that are most important in determining intention to purchase. Second, the cur-

Table 2: Changing patterns of factors affecting intention to purchase

Phase	Attitude	Sub- jective Norms	Perceivd Behavioural Control	Health	Environ- ment	Trust	Hedo- nism	Self iden- tity	Qual- ity	Food safety
I	11	7	7	4	8	2	3	1	2	1
II	13	8	2	5	4	3	0	2	2	0
III	14	4	4	7	3	5	2	0	1	2
IV	16	11	9	5	3	3	2	3	1	3
Total	54	30	22	21	18	13	7	6	6	6

rent study identifies a pattern of findings on the basis of a timeline and these classifications will help future researchers in deciding the choice of factors for studying organic food consumption behavior in their context. The study highlights significant differences in factors influencing consumers emerging along with time, and future studies should focus on newer constructs. Thus, the current study enhances the existing body of knowledge and will contribute to research questions in future empirical studies on this subject.

Practical implications

The current study has the following practical implications. First, the current study findings will provide insights to marketers to better understand the factors that affect the intention of consumers across the world. The findings on the most relevant factors could be utilised by marketers to design a marketing strategy for their consumer segments. Sellers can use these findings to achieve their objectives. They can make their decisions with a focus on important factors (e.g., attitude, subjective norms, perceived behavioural control, health attribute of a product and environment).

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