

Evaluating the Role of Health Consciousness in Organic Food Product Consumption: Mediating Role of Attitude

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Abstract

The research goal is to measure intent to buy organic food products by adding health consciousness in TPB framework. In addition it aims to evaluate attitude's mediating effect between the relationship of health consciousness and intention to purchase. Data was collected by means of a questionnaire distributed online and offline from a convenience sample from 348 Gujarat users. The hypotheses were tested using Confirmatory factor analysis and Structural equation modeling. Results found major determinants were health consciousness, attitude, and subjective norms of intention to purchase organic food products while PBC is not significantly influencing the intention to purchase. Present study confirms Attitude's mediating effect in the relationship between health consciousness and intention to purchase. Health-consciousness has more direct effect on purchasing intention than indirect effect. Ultimately it discusses marketer implications.

Keywords: Organic Food Products, TPB model, Health Consciousness, Confirmatory Factor Analysis, Structural Equation Modeling

Introduction

It is estimated that global organic food product market to reach \$262.85 billion by the end of 2022 (ASSOCHAM, 2018). Growing awareness of organic food product attributes and benefits over conventional products, consumers' concern for their health, risk of diseases like cancer posed by excessive use of pesticides and fertiliser are major influencers of consumption of organic food products. In India, local consumption of organic packaged food product market is estimated to reach INR 871 million by 2021 reporting the growth rate at 17% (ASSOCHAM, 2018). In Asia, India is currently second largest exporter of organic food product after China. In India, domestic consumption is at very low stage market share of less than 1%. This has motivated researchers to investigate the buying behaviour by developing understanding of consumers purchase intention.

In many literatures important determinants motivating consumers to buy organic food products are trust (Anisimova, 2016; Konuk, 2018; Kouy et al., 2016; Liang, 2015; Pandey et al., 2019; Suh and Lumbers, 2015; Teng and Wang, 2015), knowledge (Hsu et al., 2015; Testa et al., 2018), and Life style (Nasir and Karakaya, 2014; Basha and Lal, 2019; Chen and Lobo, 2012; Ham et al., 2018). Despite of these results, many of researchers have found these predictors are not significant in influencing purchase intention (e.g. for trust; Basha and Lal, 2019). Therefore, it cannot be claimed that these factors will influence all consumers' buying decisions.

In the literatures, attitude has found inconsistent result in affecting buying intention (Michaelidou and Hassan, 2008). Similarly, studies have reported positive relationship of subjective norms (Ham et al., 2018; Nuttavuthisit and Thøgersen, 2017; Onel, 2017) and perceived behavioural control (Ham et al., 2018; Maichum et al., 2016; Onel, 2017) with purchase intention. Against that studies have found subjective norms (Ashraf et al., 2018; Maichum et al., 2016; Pomsanam et al., 2014) and perceived behavioural control (Onel, 2017; Al-Swidi et al., 2014) not significant in influencing purchase intention. This rationalises to develop sound understanding of consumers of Gujarat for factors motivating of buying of organic food products. Consumers concern for their health increased over the years, resulting change in their lifestyle all over the world. Limited literatures have systematically inspected the role of health consciousness in the context of organic food products. Role of mediator variable is a vital in explaining relationship among variables in social sciences. In context of present study, very few studies made an attempt to investigate the mediating impact of attitude between consumer health consciousness and purchasing intent.

The main contribution of this study is to gain better insight by (1) exploring the role of health consciousness as factors in the extended TPB model for measuring intention to purchase organic food products (2) investigating the mediating impact of attitude (3) exploring the direct and indirect effect of health consciousness on purchase intention. Next section covers brief of literature reviewed, proposed research model, hypotheses to be tested. After that research methodology and results are discussed. Finally implications of the study are presented.

Theoretical Background and Hypotheses Development

Many literatures have supported to satisfactorily explaining power of purchase intention with the help of TPB model in case of food studies (Ashraf et al., 2018; Basha and Lal, 2019; Ham et al., 2018; Maichum et al., 2017; Onel, 2017; Rahman and Noor, 2016; Vabo and Hansen, 2016; Suh and Lumbers, 2015). According to Conner and Norman (2005) the components of Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) are accurate determinants of purchase intention. Hence, this rationalise for adoption of this model to attaining the goal of present study. According to Read et al. (2013) explanation power can be increased by additional constructs in TPB model. To investigate the role of health conscious, this variable is included in TPB model to measure buying intention in case of organic food product.

Health Consciousness (HC)

An individual's alertness on one's own diet and healthy lifestyle is known as health consciousness. Previous results have indicated that a health benefit is prime factor in consuming of organic food product. Health awareness plays important role in affecting consumers' purchase behaviour (Kim and Chung, 2011). Also, results were consistent about health consciousness on moulding positive attitude (Cabuk, 2014; Yang et al., 2014). Empirical studies confirm the health consciousness affects buying intention (Kapuge, 2016; Kouey et al., 2016; Pomsanam et al., 2014, Cabuk, 2014). Hence, it encourages formulating following hypotheses:

H₁: Health consciousness significantly influences consumers' attitude.

H₂: Health consciousness significantly influences organic food products intention to buy.

Attitude (ATT)

The simplest way to define is attitudes represents what one likes and dislikes (Blackwell et. al, 2001). According to Ajzen (1991), it is characterized as “a degree of positive or unfavourable behavioural assessment and acts as a primary factor in deciding intent”. Few studies attempted attitude as mediator in finding relationship between motivating factors like environment concern, food safety, and organic food knowledge and purchase intention of organic food products. Present study aims to investigate the role of attitude as a mediator between health consciousness and purchase intention. In the context of organic food products attitude has significant positively influenced intention (Ham et al., 2018; Liang, 2015; Maichum et al., 2016; Nuttavuthisit and Thøgersen, 2017). Therefore, it encourages formulating following hypothesis:

H₃: Attitude significantly influences organic food products intention to buy.

Subjective Norms (SN)

Ajzen (1991) defines subjective norms construct as “the perceived social pressure to perform or not to perform the behaviour”. People who constitute reference group plays important role in influencing consumers buying decisions. This implies that if individuals who are imperative to consumers' consider that it is beneficial to consume organic food products then he or she gets influenced by them. Empirical evidence supports subjective norms act as determinant for buying intention (Ham et al., 2018; Nuttavuthisit and Thøgersen, 2017; Onel, 2017). Therefore, it encourages formulating following hypothesis:

H₄: Subjective norms significantly influence organic food products intention to buy.

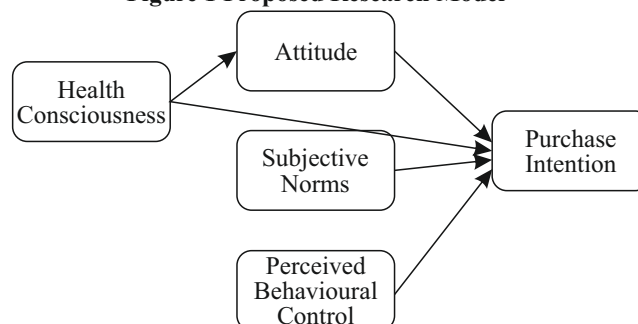
Perceived Behavioural Control (PBC)

It can be defined as the individual perception of possible difficulties that they can encountered with while performing a definite behaviour (Ajzen, 1991). It's about how individual perceive ease or difficult to perform certain behaviour. In the context of organic food products higher is the PBC, more the chances of consumers engaging in buying of organic food products. Empirical results supports that greater the perceived resources (i.e. time, money, etc...) and lesser the perceived barriers (i.e. availability of organic food products, price, etc...) increase likelihood of purchasing organic food products (Ham et al., 2018; Maichum et al. (2016); Nuttavuthisit and Thøgersen, 2017; Onel, 2017). These results encouraged to formulate following hypothesis:

H₅: PBC significantly influence organic food products intention to buy.

Based on the discussion following research model proposed:

Figure 1 Proposed Research Model



Research Methodology

Survey Instrument

In process of operationalizing the construct, various literatures were reviewed and adopted for present study. Attitude, subjective norms, and PBC were assessed with seven-items adopted from (Ajzen, 2002; Arvola et al., 2008; Chen, 2009; Taylor and Todd, 1995; Olivová, 2011; Al Swidi et al., 2014; Bredahl, 2001). Purchase intention was measured by using five-item adopted from (Pandey et al., 2019; Gould, 1988; Bower 2001). Finally, seven items scale was adapted to measure health consciousness from (Olivová, 2011; Gould, 1988; Squires et al., 2001; Emma Lea & Tony Worsley, 2005; Golnaz et.al, 2011; Tarkiainen and Sundqvist, 2005; Kutnohorská and Tomšík, 2013). Five point Likert scale (1 indicates strongly disagree, 5 indicates strongly agree) was used to measure above discussed constructs.

Sample Selection

Present study use convenience sampling technique to collect total 432 samples. Samples were collected by using online (Google form) and offline method from the Surat and Ahmedabad. After careful evaluation of samples (eliminating missing values and/or partial incomplete survey), total of 348 usable samples were filtered and considered for further data analysis.

Sample Description

Descriptive Sample analysis of organic food product reveals that 62% buyers were male (n=215) and 38% were female (n=133). In terms of age groups, 47% respondents were aged between 18 to 24 years (n=163). As per the educational qualification, 49% of respondents (n=170) had a bachelor's degree, 25% of respondents had schooling till high school (n=86). As per their profession, 37% were salaried (n=129), 23% were students (n=81), 25% were self-employed (n=87), and 13% housewife (n=46). As per the monthly family income, 45% respondents having monthly income between Rs. 25,001 - Rs. 50,000 (n=155), 30% of them having Rs. 50,001 - Rs. 75,000 (n=104).

Data Analysis

A multivariate analytical technique known as Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) is used to evaluate structural relationships between constructs in proposed research model. It is most widely used with the help of observed variable to examine the relationship between latent variables. Present study uses the SEM to test hypotheses based on the research model being proposed.

Reliability and Validity Measurement

Reliability of scale define as its ability to generate consistent results for the same set of items independently of where, when, or by whom the measurement is made. For assessment of reliability, cronbach coefficient alpha is widely accepted choice and most reported statistics (Rosnow and Rosenthal, 1992). Cronbach alpha is the measure of internal consistency and can be defined as “the degree to which responses are consistent across the items within a single measure (Kline, 2005, p. 59)”. In most literatures $\alpha = 0.7$ or more ensures having reliability (Hair et al., 1998).

Validity is “the extent to which a measuring instrument measure what it is purported/intended to measure” (Cooper and Schindler, 2008). It is establishes when convergent and discriminant validity confirms in the scale. The value of standardised factor loading of all variables should be greater than 0.7 (Hair et al., 2006). Average Explained Variance (AVE) of ≥ 0.5 and $CR \geq 0.7$ shows definite evidence of convergent validity and internal consistency (Hair et al., 2006). The existence of scale reliability (Cronbach alpha value for all constructs > 0.70 and convergent validity (CR value > 0.70 and AVE value > 0.5) is verified in Table 1.

Table 1 Reliability and Validity Measurement

Constructs		No. of Items	Cronbach Alpha	Composite Reliability (CR)	AVE
ATT	Attitude	7	0.904	0.879	0.644
SN	Subjective Norms	6	0.924	0.854	0.594
PBC	Perceived Behavioural Control	7	0.896	0.814	0.523
HC	Health Consciousness	7	0.910	0.899	0.641
PI	Purchase Intention	5	0.890	0.867	0.620

Table 2 described AVE-squared values are higher than the correlation coefficients which ensures that construct is distinct and not identical. Therefore, factor measurements demonstrate discriminant validity. The overall measurement model was good to fit as all the indices for measurement model are within the threshold limit ($\chi^2=418.016$, $df=178$; $P<0.05$; $\chi^2/df=2.348$; $GFI=0.902$; $TLI=0.932$; $CFI=0.943$; $RMSEA=0.06$; $PNFI=0.767$; $PGFI=0.695$) (refer table 3).

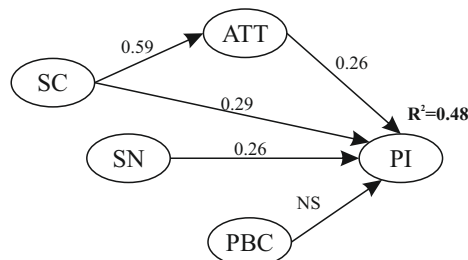
Table 2 Discriminant Validity Measurement

	ATT	HC	PBC	SN	I
ATT	0.803				
HC	0.551***	0.771			
PBC	0.472***	0.539***	0.723		
SN	0.552***	0.429***	0.577***	0.800	
I	0.579***	0.580***	0.515***	0.557***	0.788

Note: *** $p<0.001$

Structural Model

The structural model has been validated and adopted as the final stage of study. Figure 2 represents the path analysis for extended TPB model.

Figure 2 : Structural Model of Extended TPB Model

Note: NS-not significant

Table 3 presents suggested cut-off values and attained values for structural model for extend TPB framework good to fit or not.

The SEM results in table 3 revealed that model was over-identified and all the goodness-of-fit statistics were met all acceptable criteria ($\chi^2= 342.888$; $\chi^2/df= 2.184$; $p= 0.000$; $GFI= 0.912$; $RMSEA=0.05$; $CFI=$

0.953; NFI=0.917; TLI=0.943; PNFI=0.758, and PGFI=0.682).

Table 3 Goodness of Fit Statistics for CFA and SEM Suggested and Attained Value

Goodness of Fit Statistics & R ²	Suggested Cut-off Values	Attained Value
Absolute Fit Measures		
χ^2	Significant p-values	342.888, p<0.000
df	≥ 0	157
χ^2/df	2 to 5	2.184
GFI	> 0.90*, > 0.80#	0.912
RMSEA	< 0.05*, 0.05 – 0.08#	0.05
Incremental Fit Measures		
CFI	> 0.90*, > 0.80#	0.953
NFI	> 0.90*, > 0.80#	0.917
TLI	> 0.90*, > 0.80#	0.943
Parsimonious Fit Measures		
PNFI	> 0.5	0.758
PGFI	> 0.5	0.682
R ²	Purchase Intention	0.48

Note: Adopted from Hair et al. (2006), Hair et al. (1998); Hu and Bentler (1995); Baumgartner and Homburg (1996); Byrne (1998), * - good fit, # - acceptable

From the Table 4, it was found that health consciousness posited a significant positive relationship with attitude ($t=9.151$, $\beta=0.59$, $p<0.001$) and purchase intention ($t=3.766$, $\beta=0.29$, $p<0.001$). Attitude ($t=3.950$, $\beta=0.26$, $p<0.001$) and subjective norms ($t=4.324$, $\beta=0.26$, $p<0.001$) also suggest a significant positive relationship with buying intention, while perceived behavioural control does not have a significant relationship with buying intention ($t=1.633$, $\beta=0.08$, $p=0.103$). The model explains 48% of total variance.

Table 4: Regression Weights for Extended TPB Model

Hypothesis	Relationship	Standardise Estimates (β)	S.E.	t-value	Indirect Effect	Total Effect	Sig. p value	Result
H ₁	HC > ATT	0.59	0.07	9.151	---	---	***	Supported
H ₂	HC > PI	0.29	0.09	3.766	0.155	0.445	***	Supported
H ₃	ATT > PI	0.26	0.07	3.950	---	---	***	Supported
H ₄	SN > PI	0.26	0.06	4.324	---	---	***	Supported
H ₅	PBC > PI	0.08	0.04	1.633	---	---	0.103	Not Supported

Note: ***p<0.001

Discussion

Table 4 findings indicate that attitude positively affects intention to buy ($\beta = 0.441$, $p < 0.001$). This implies that higher chances of purchasing intention result if consumers have more positive attitude towards organic food (H3). This result conforms to several previous studies (Ham et al., 2018; Nuttavuthisit and Thøgersen, 2017; Onel, 2017). Subjective norms also positively influence intention to buy ($\beta = 0.26$, $p < 0.001$). This can be interpreted as individuals close to consumers think that it is beneficial to consume food produced organically, it increases the intention to buy (H4). The said result is also empirically tested by many literatures (Ham et al., 2018; Nuttavuthisit and Thøgersen, 2017; Onel, 2017). The present study found no significant association between perceived behavioural control and intention to buy organic food products (H5). Similar results were also supported by literatures (Onel, 2017; Rahamn and Noor, 2016; Al-Swidi et al., 2014). Most of them inferred that the said insignificant relationship could be in sample, however it does not necessarily mean that model is invalid. This could be further investigated in cross-sectional survey to better understand the said phenomenon. Health consciousness positively influences attitude ($\beta = 0.59$, $p < 0.001$) and purchase intention ($\beta = 0.29$, $p < 0.001$) of consumers in the case of organic food products supported by literature (Yang et al., 2014; Cabuk, 2014) and (Kapuge, 2016; Kouey et al., 2016; Hsu et al., 2015) respectively (H1, H2).

In absence of mediator variable (attitude) the direct effect of health consciousness was positive ($\beta = 0.441$). After adding mediator variable (attitude) the relationship between health consciousness on purchase intention was positive ($\beta = 0.29$). So, it implies that there is a presence of partial mediation. At the same time, attitude was also significant and positively affecting intent to buy ($\beta = 0.26$). This confirms attitude act as mediator between health consciousness and intention to buy. One such interesting finding was health consciousness had a direct effect (0.29) as well as an indirect effect (0.155) mediated by attitude on buying intention. Thus, the finding was direct effect of health consciousness on purchase intention was more than indirect effect.

Also, in inclusion of health consciousness in TPB model (i.e. extended TPB model), increases the explanation power of model ($R^2 = 0.48$) than of only TPB model (without inclusion of health consciousness) the explanation of model ($R^2 = 0.36$). Hence, this result is also consistent with researchers claimed that in social sciences inclusion of variable in TPB framework can enhance the prediction power of studied variable.

Implication of Study

Theoretical Implications

One of the contributions is that significant effect of health consciousness in influencing the purchase intention. It empirically proves the partial mediating effect of attitude between health consciousness and intention to buy. Also, it found health consciousness is having more of direct effect than indirect effect on purchase intention.

Practical Implications for Marketers

Another important contribution based on findings on role of health consciousness, is the marketers may identify the segment of consumers who are very much concern for their health by effective segmentation strategies and then targeting them with right set of marketing-mix strategies. This will surely help in boosting the sales of organic food products. Also, it was found that a reference group plays an important role in influencing consumers' buying decisions. So, as to initiate the positive word of mouth (WOM) about organic food products over conventional food products will not only increase the chances of influencing target consumers but will also positively affect their attitude towards of organic food products.

Limitations and Future Scope of Study

First, present study aims in measuring intention and not the actual behaviour. Therefore, this gives direction to future studies can attempt in uncovering actual behaviour can understand more in depth manner. Second, findings of this study are in general to organic food product and not specific to any product class or category. Consumers opinion can vary based on product belong to different category. Future direction can suggest to specific class of product can be researched for specific marketing implication in designing strategies.

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