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Consumer Buying Behaviour towards Organic Food Products: A Systematic Literature Review

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ABSTRACT

Objectives: The purpose of the study is to comprehend the determinants affecting consumer purchasing behaviour towards organic food items due to the growing demand for safe, healthy and green food options. Owing to rising awareness, still there exists a large gap between intention and actual purchase behaviour.

Methodology: The study adopted a systematic literature review framework, following the PRISMA protocol for transparency and reproducibility. The articles were accessed from Scopus and Web of Science databases through explicit search strings. Following inclusion and exclusion filters such as removing duplicates, non-English articles, book chapters, and outdated publications – 56 research articles appearing between 2014 and 2024 were shortlisted for review. Five broad categories of factors shaping organic food purchasing behaviour were noted by the review: attitude and perception, concern for health, concern for the environment, price and trust and certification.

Findings: Even when consumers indicate positive attitudes and health or environmental motivation for organic food, actual purchase is hampered by price sensitivity, mistrust of certification and availability limitations, among others to produce the intention-behaviour gap.

Conclusion: The results can help practitioners and marketers in responding to concerns of consumers by paying attention to enhancing product trust, lowering price barriers, and increasing product availability. The findings can help in more effective strategy formulation for organic food consumption promotion.

Keywords: Organic Food; Systematic Literature Review; Attitude; Health and Environment etc.

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INTRODUCTION

Soil and water pollution have emerged as a by-product of decades of traditional method of farming. Unnecessary or improper application of pesticides and other artificial chemicals destroys the ecosystem, biodiversity, and human health. This fact tells us that innovations in current production processes are needed to attain agricultural system sustainability and enable the next generation to generate adequate food supplies. Organic farm production allows for regulated, certified, safe, and high-quality food growth while offering significant economic and environmental benefits and supporting a healthy environment. Organic product demand has risen steadily over 20 years. ((PDF) Global Organic Food Market, n.d.) Over the last 20 years,

consumer demand for all-natural, chemical-free, ecologically friendly food has soared due to increased health, environmental, and ethical concerns. (Dimitri & Dettmann 2012). Due to nutritional values and perceived health benefits now, consumers are ready to pay premium prices (T. H. Lee et al., n.d.). Numerous researches have examined what motivates individuals to consume organic food, what deters them, what factors affect their choice to purchase organic food, and what factors affect their desire to buy organic food. Studies demonstrate that customers like organic food, but they don't necessarily purchase it. Therefore, there is a knowledge gap on what influences customers' organic food purchases. Knowledge, price perception, health awareness, availability, and subjective criteria were shown to influence organic food consumption. (Singh & Verma, 2017).

This study will synthesis organic food consumption literature to identify the main reasons consumers eat organic. It will also help in understanding the various factors from different segments and theories used to study consumer behaviours in relation to intent to purchase or purchase of organic food. The paper's compilation of the factors influencing organic food product intention will assist academics and practitioners. Also, it covers the actual buying behaviour of consumers. The paper's findings may help practitioners overcome customers' mistrust in organic food and deliver the methods they seek. Hence, to help close the information gap, the current research is crucial.

The following are the research questions.

- RQ1: What are the chosen study's time frame for publishing? What countries are covered? What theoretical frameworks are applied? Which top journals the studies got published?
- RQ2: How do people decide which organic food items to buy?
- RQ3: Why do people choose to purchase organic food products?

Objectives of the study.

1. To Examine the selected studies to determine its publication timeframe, geographical contexts, underlying theoretical frameworks and the journals of publication.
2. Determine the most critical factors affecting customers' organic food purchases and their impact on the buying process.

METHODOLOGY

The current study utilizes the SLR technique to integrate the existing information and thoroughly understand the elements affecting customers towards organic food. The study has used two months period to complete the review. Following the PRISMA protocol, a thorough literature review is conducted using the systematic framework.

Stage 1: Identification

Scopus and the Web of Science databases were used. Web of Science retrieved 462 papers between 2002 and 2024, whereas Scopus recovered 33 between 2005 and 2024. Scopus and Web of Science databases were used to find relevant studies for the review. To download articles, the search string ("organic food" and "consumer and purchase and behavior " or "purchase and behavior " or "buying and Behaviour") was used. During the several phases of the review process, numerous criteria were applied to ascertain the relevance and quality of the systematic review.

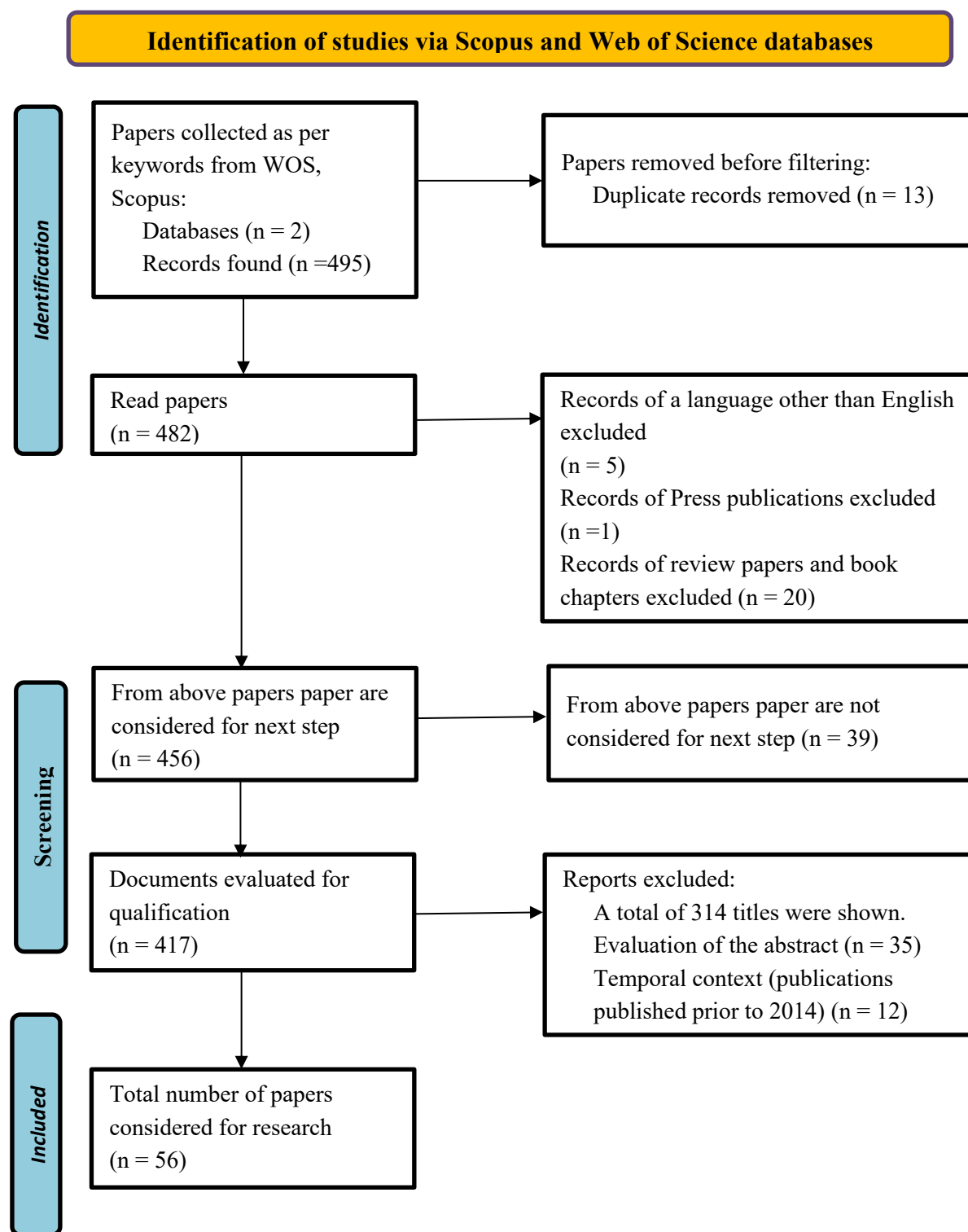
Stage 2: Screening

The first screening removed any duplicate entries from the papers gathered. Initially, 495 articles were collected. 13 duplicate articles were removed, bringing the count down to 482. Later on, non – English articles were excluded from consideration, and 5 papers were removed. One press publication was also removed. In addition, 20 articles were excluded, including review articles and book chapters, after these exclusions, 456 articles were left for subsequent processing.

Stage 3: Criteria

The exclusion criteria act like a gatekeeper that helps us understand the research papers that will not fit into our study and helps us narrow down the vast pool of research studies. The following are the criteria used to eliminate the articles from the final paper review they are as follows.

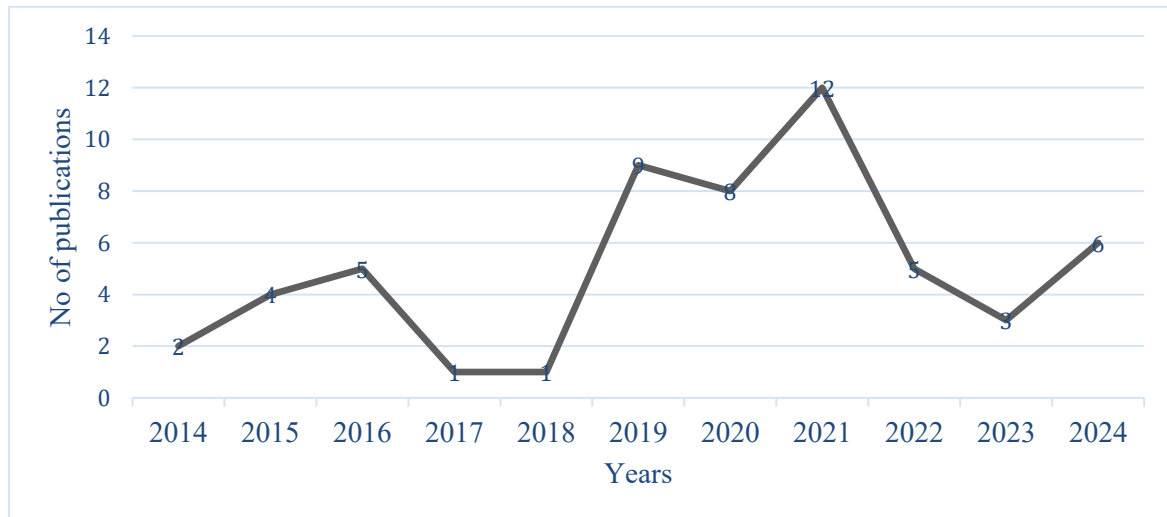
Articles other than the English language were eliminated, articles published in press, review papers and book chapters were not considered, and articles published before 2014 were not considered. Out of these 456 papers, 39 papers were not retrieved; out of 417 papers, 314 papers were eliminated based on the title analyses like some paper's titles were not related to the study's objective; out of 103 papers, 35 papers were eliminated based on the abstract analyses, as they did not have the main objective to analyse the various factors were eliminated. Out of 68 papers, 12 were eliminated because of time frame criteria, as the study includes papers from only the last 10 years, i.e. from 2014 to 2024; hence, the study includes only 56 papers for the final review. Following is the flowchart to help you understand how to eliminate the articles.



(McKenzie JE)

Descriptive analysis of selected studies

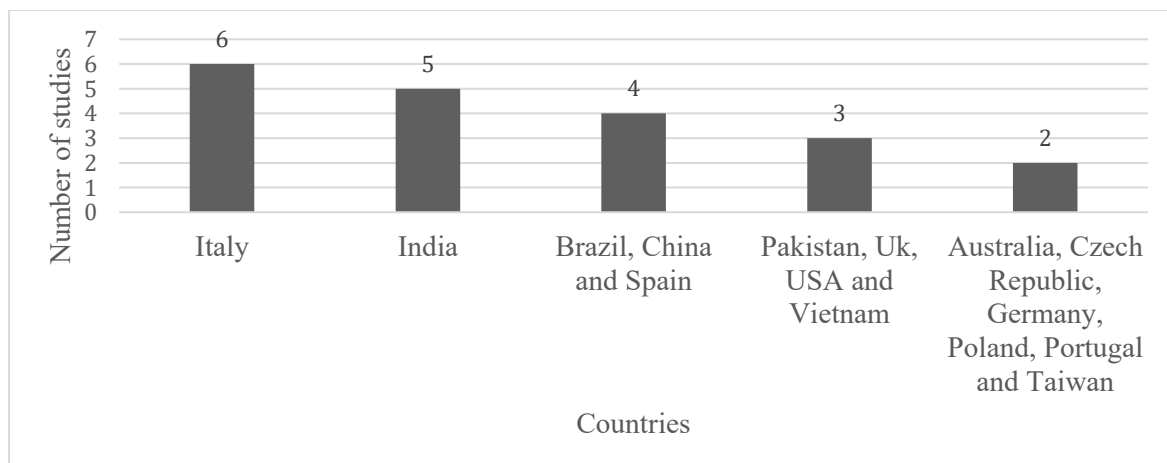
1. Number of publications



Graph 1. Publication trend (2014 - 2024)

Articles publications was minimum in 2017 and 2018 i.e. one and the maximum of 12 in 2021.

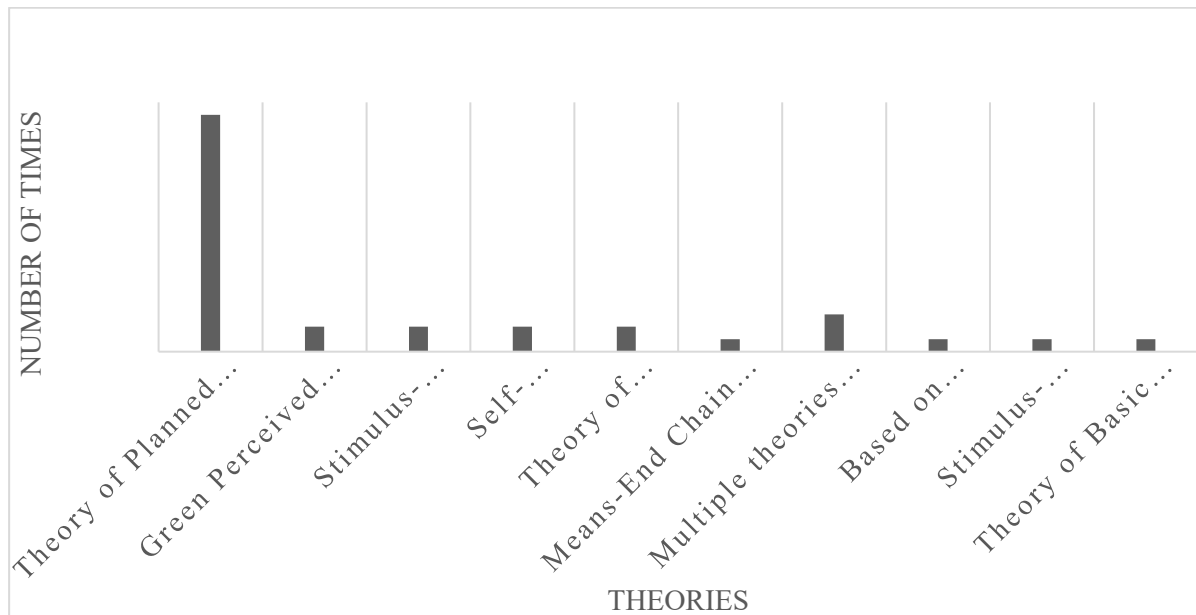
2. Number of studies as per country



Graph 2. Geographic distribution of studies

Throughout the countries listed, the minimum number of the studies lists at two in the Australia, Czech Republic, Germany, Poland, Portugal and Taiwan and the maximum number stands at six in Italy.

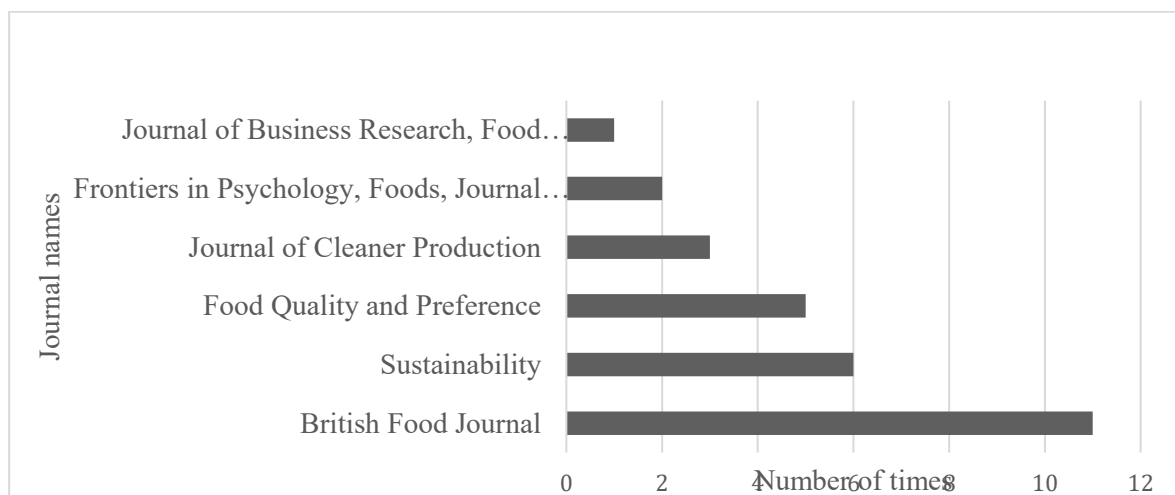
3. Different theories used



Graph 3. Different theories used on consumer behaviours towards organic food products

The minimum number of theories employed is likely one i.e. means end chain theory, based on consumer models, stimulus-organism-response consequence model and theory of basic values while the maximum is represented by the theory of planned behaviour.

4. Top journals publishing



Graph 4. Top Journals published

The maximum publication is seen in the British food journal and the minimum is listed for the journals like journal of business research, current psychology, frontiers in sustainable food systems and food science and nutrition.

Significant factors affecting consumer buying behaviour for organic food products

A complete systematic review of the relevant literature was done to answer study objectives 2, which attempted to identify organic food buying variables. The key elements are summarized in the following table. Factors with comparable contexts are combined into one factor and only factors that appear many times in the chosen literature are included, as some studies have utilized the same variables but given them different names. Thematic study examined how themes affected organic food customer intention and buying behaviour.

Table 1. Major factors influencing consumer buying behaviour for organic food products.

Sr. No	Major Factor	Grouped factors	Authors
01	Attitude and perception	Consumer attitude Attitude towards organic food Attitude Attitudes General attitude	Canova, L., et. al.
02	Health concern	Health consciousness Perceived health benefits Health and lifestyles Health Beliefs Health Motivation Post-pandemic health awareness	Shalini Talwar, et. al.
03	Environmental concern	Environmental ethics Environmental awareness Green perceived value Environmental concern Sustainability motives Eco-friendliness	Lubna Nafees, et. al.
04	Price and economic factors	Price Tolerance Price Willingness to pay Price perception Perceived price Perceived monetary barriers Price sensitivity	Lubna Nafees, et. al.
05	Trust and certification	Trust in organic certification Trust in organic food Organic label trust Trust in labels Trust in organic food	Kinga Nagy-Pércsi, et. al.

01: Attitude and perception

According to (Al-Swidi et al., 2014), Subjective standards moderate the purchase intention-behavior relationship. Friends, relatives, and prominent individuals in a consumer's social circle provide information. Social influence marketing methods like community-based initiatives and influencer endorsements may affect consumer food views.

A study by (Kowalska et al., 2021) found that in Poland and the UK, consumers reveals that pro-social attitudes and green consumption values directly influence their organic food purchasing Behaviour; It seems that cultural differences have a big role in how people perceive organic food.

According to the survey, consumers' organic food evaluations depend on trust. Customers' belief in certified organic labeling varies by location, although organic products are becoming more popular. (Canova et al., 2020)

In emerging economies, trust issues are even more critical. (Xie et al., 2015) Food fraud and mislabeling concerns in Eastern China have been preventing the broad acceptance of organic food even with increasing consumer consciousness. This implies that regulatory agencies and certifications must increase transparency and consumer awareness to narrow the trust gap. (Leyva-Hernández et al., 2021) Consumer choice influences trust and purchase. Health and sustainability motivate people to choose organic food.

Conversely, (Nafees et al., 2022) Research shows that Indian millennials are attracted to consume organic food for health and environmental reasons. The research found a negative connection between attitude and intention to buy for organic food, despite universal support. Cost and availability hinder its purchase. Likewise, (Testa et al., 2019) recognized the difference between behavior and intention, showing that although many consumers desire organic food, price, convenience, and availability restrict their buying behavior.

02: Health concern

One of the widely discussed determinants behind organic food purchases is ought to be health-related (Gundala & Singh, 2021) performed an empirical research on US organic and non-organic food consumption, which showed that health awareness influences consumer attitudes toward organic food purchases. The survey concluded that health-conscious consumers choose organic food because it has more nutrients, less additives, and no pesticides. (Xie et al., 2015) Eastern Chinese researchers revealed that health concerns and pesticide residues promote organic food demand. Wealthier and more educated customers want organic food and healthy living. In addition (Talwar et al., 2021) Consumers' health and safety worries effect their organic food spending.

Despite wanting healthy organic food, people don't always purchase it. (Testa et al., 2019), Explored the intention behaviour gap, stressing that although health-conscious consumers know the worth of organic food, barriers such as high prices and limited supply direct them away from regular organic purchases. (Tung et al., n.d.) have examined consumer behaviour in Taiwan and discovered "attitudinal inconsistency". Many shoppers worry pesticides and food safety. These difficulties because customers distrust organic food labels and avoid buying it. Since health risks are underreported, trust organic food certification and be honest about label claims. Credence attributes are those from which health-conscious consumers cannot draw information directly, such as organic, pesticide and sustainable products (H.-J. Lee & Hwang, 2016). analyzed the perceived credence attributes influencing organic food purchases where health-conscious consumers' quality and safety are higher.

03: Environmental concern

(Mondelaers et al 2016), organic food is healthier and environmentally friendly than conventionally formed food. However, their study likewise showed that consumers value health

characteristics more than environmental characteristics, although both are important in making purchase decisions. Because of health concerns and environmental consequences, many people choose organic food. (Leonidou et al., 2022) More personal behavior control and desire to purchase improve organic food consumption among environmentally conscious clients. Reinforcing eco-friendly practices relies on customers' faith in organic certification and environmental labeling. (Bazhan et al., 2024) looked at organic food consumption in developing nations and noted that environmental concerns influence purchase intention. Education and awareness affect customer confidence in organic food labeling, the research found. The researchers advise governments and regulatory organizations to strengthen transparency and certification standards to raise public awareness. A different viewpoint, held by (Nafees et al., 2022), analysed the Indian millennials consuming organic food, and it indicated that there was lesser sensitivity to price regarding consumers who consume organic food for environmental reasons. It could be inferred that eco-conscious consumers value sustainability over cost, making them perfect targets for high-end organic brands.

Environmental awareness positively enhances an individual's intention to purchase organic foods; however, many constraints hinder this choice from being widely accepted. (Testa et al., 2019) noted how many people declared a preference for organic food yet did not purchase it for a higher price and limited availability, and this phenomenon they termed the intention-behaviour gap. Another important buying element was investigated by (Sandrina et al., 2021), noticing the impacts of perceived convenience availability in mainstream supermarkets account for environmentally conscious consumer choices. Another relevant factor would be the role of culture.

04: Price and Economic factors

The organic food price remains one of its significant drawbacks in many consumers' points of view. (Xie et al., 2015) Looking at how people in Eastern China perceive organic food, we find that they agree that it offers advantages. However, the high polluting price has rendered them less inclined to buy it regularly; a study revealed that better-educated people were inclined to purchase organic food products. Lower-income people reason and cannot afford the items. (Leonidou et al., 2022) Found that price-sensitive consumers view organic food as an unnecessary luxury rather than a necessity. In addition, the research by (Nafees et al., 2022) studying buying behavior among urban Indian millennials found a negative relationship between attitude and purchase intention; consequently, most millennials comprehend the value of organic food but prefer cheaper conventional alternatives because they cannot afford it. Policies to convert price premiums or subsidize prices or offers will allow organic food access to develop. Organic food's quality, dependability, and safety affect customers' willingness to spend more, even if it's more expensive. (Leonidou et al., 2022). Consumers' willingness to pay extra makes organic food popular. Certified organic labeling is reliable. Customers may request organic products at a higher price. (Testa et al., 2019), which also raises problem that, in actual purchasing decisions, many economic factors influence the up-or-down valuation, such as a household's income and stability. Therefore, pricing policies, such as discounts, bulk buying incentives, or government subsidies, must align organic products with consumer expectations.

Chinese agricultural merchants still see organic food as a luxury commodity for the wealthy. (Xie et al., 2015) made ideal recommendations. This research suggests instituting monetary incentive programs to draw in more customers interested in organic foods. On the same note, (Leonidou et al., 2022) paper demonstrates how cultural distinctions filter price-sensitivity.

Hence, those from individualistic cultures are more willing to pay a reasonable amount for organic food than those from collectivistic. (Testa et al., 2019) proposed some policy interventions appealing to reducing taxes on organic food products and subsidizing farmers who choose organic agriculture.

05: Trust and Certification

A major driver for consumption of organic food is consumer trust in organic labels. (Nagy-Pércsi & Fogarassy, 2019) Certification labels significantly influenced organic purchasing behaviour in Hungary. Four client groups were free food eaters, health-conscious, unsatisfied, safe, and quality price comparator. It was suggested that while health and ethical production-oriented people rely more on certification labels, price-conscious consumers usually do not. (Xie et al., 2015) also discovered, even since food fraud scandals broke, this implies that even when organic food becomes more widely known, concerns, however valid, over false labelling and subpar regulation still keep many from purchasing it. This shows how crucial functional governance and transparency are in organic food certification. (Leonidou et al., 2022) It has been found third-party certifications and government interventions are believed to provide confidence to consumers of organic foods. Therefore, efforts must be made to build trust in organic certification for market development. As organic certification provides many benefits, many challenges still exist. According to the results of the (Nagy-Pércsi & Fogarassy 2019) study, Hungarian consumers misunderstand organic food labels, which increases confusion and distrust. The study recommended public awareness campaigns for consumers to understand organic foods better and build their trust in certification. The research suggests that governments need to impose stiffer penalties for fraudulent labelling to protect consumers from misleading claims. In addition, (Leonidou et al., 2022) have stressed that the degree to which people believe in certification is greatly affected by their price sensitivity.

Discussion

Many economic, social, and psychological aspects impact organic food consumption. A persistent gap between intention and behaviour exists, where customers have good opinions about organic foods but cannot buy them due to availability and economic input concerns. (Singh et al., 2017) (Basha et al., 2024). As health awareness rises, consumers see organic foods as safer and healthier, but pricing remains the major obstacle. (Pacho et al., 2020) (Tandon et al., 2021). Utmost importantly, economic factors, with price sensitivity being very significant, wherein while many consumers recognize the benefits of organic foods, they still deem them overpriced (H.-J. Lee & Hwang, 2016) (Kushwah, Dhir, & Sagar, 2019). Price-sensitive consumers often prioritize affordability at the expense of being eco-friendly, thus extending their reach to a more extensive section of society (Nguyen et al., 2019). Nonetheless, trust in certification acting as key moderating part in purchase intention, whereby consumers with more trust in labelling with organic certification are more likely to offer support for a premium price (Canova et al., 2020).

CONCLUSION

The researchers carefully examined organic food customers' motives. Even if health awareness, environmental welfare, and trust make customers prefer organic food, the study discovered a large gap between wanting and buying. Price, difficulties with use, and mistrust in organic certifications remain significant barriers to purchase. The organic food business must now

tighten certification and labelling to gain consumer trust. The study has many limitations, secondary sources and systematic literature reviews bias outcomes and limit empirical analysis to current research, and it doesn't look at how consumer behaviour varies in various culture Intention-behaviour gap. Digital marketing, social media impact, and sustainability-driven consumerism are all underdiscussed in the research. Future research could examine the roles of digital marketing, online retailing, and personalized consumer interaction play in promoting organic food consumption. Therefore, academics and the industry may address these challenges and contribute to sustainable, healthy food consumption.

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