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A STUDY ON THE PURCHASE INTENTION OF ORGANIC FOOD BY MILLENNIAL CONSUMERS

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Abstract
This research endeavours to investigate how millennials intentions to purchase organic food products are influenced by range of factors including their sensory appeal, subjective norms, perceived norms, attitude, trust and willingness to pay premium price. To gather data, we collected responses from 480 respondents through stratified random sampling method from various locations. The collected data were further analysed through techniques together with CFA and SEM utilising software AMOS 21 and SPSS. The findings suggests that sensory appeal, subjective norm and perceived norm significantly influence attitude towards organic food. In addition, attitude, trust and willingness to pay premium also significantly influence the purchase intention of organic food in millennials.
Keywords- Millennial, Organic food, Attitude, Purchase intention, Sensory appeal, Subjective norms, Perceived norms, Trust in organic food, Willingness to pay premium price.

INTRODUCTION

The projected global population for 2050 is approximately 9.7 billion, necessitating a substantial increase of around 70% in food production to adequately sustain this growing population. However, this challenge is compounded by constraints related to land and water availability (FAO, 2018). Many research studies from different parts of the world, including emerging markets, have explored the reasons why people choose to buy organic food. Hughner et al., (2007), Kushwah et al., (2019), and Rana and Paul (2017). Frequently, research studies tend to focus on consumer motives within specific local contexts (Steenkamp, 2019). However, an interesting finding by Thøgerson et al. (2015) in a comparative study revealed that motives for buying organic food were remarkably similar when examining Brazil, China, Western Europe, and North America. This similarity in motives was also echoed in four other comparative studies, as well as in our own review, which found consistency across regions and economic circumstances. Consequently, a condensed set of seven common motivators emerged, mirroring the findings of Nafees et al. (2020).

Organic farming, practiced as part of sustainable agriculture, addresses not only the immediate food needs of the current generation in an eco-friendly manner but also safeguards the requirements of future generations while preserving our environment. This approach to farming enhances soil health and prevents the introduction of harmful chemicals into our water sources.

Organic farmers steer clear of non-renewable, petroleum-based fertilizers and pesticides. As a result, it promotes greater biodiversity and reduces greenhouse gas emissions. The broader the adoption of the organic farming model throughout the nation, the more effectively we can promote a healthier future for our country.

This study aims to address two significant research gaps in the literature on organic food products. Firstly, previous research has primarily focused on segmenting consumers based on factors like environmental consciousness, health consciousness, lifestyle, and values. However, there are limited studies that explore segmentation across different age groups, especially the millennial generation, which is characterized by its unique values, concern for the environment, and relatively higher wealth (Ivanova et al., 2019; Sheahan, 2005). Despite the potential of the millennial segment for marketers of green products in India (Morgan Stanley, 2017), limited research has been conducted on this group. Therefore, this study aims to provide valuable insights into millennials' organic food purchasing intentions.

Secondly, existing literature predominantly focuses on consumer behavior in developed nations. While some commonalities exist in consumers' motivations for buying organic food products worldwide (Thøgersen et al., 2015), it is essential to investigate consumer behavior across both developed and developing nations to develop effective marketing strategies (Rana and Paul, 2017). To bridge this gap, the current study's objective is to examine the factors influencing millennials' organic food purchasing decisions in India, drawing from key drivers identified in extensive research.

The purpose of this research paper is to delve into the factors that influence millennials' purchase intention towards organic food products. The organic food industry has experienced remarkable growth over the past decade (Loureiro & Hine, 2002), and millennials are poised to play a pivotal role in shaping its future trajectory. By exploring their sensory appeal, subjective norms, perceived values, we can gain valuable insights into what drives millennials to choose organic food over conventional alternatives. Additionally, by exploring this variables within the context of millennials, this research will contribute valuable insights to both academia and industry. Moreover, the finding will be helpful to organic food marketers and policy makers to design effective strategy.

To craft a segmentation strategy that truly resonates with consumers, it's wise to look beyond age and delve into the unique characteristics of different generations. In recent times, there has been a significant focus on understanding the millennial generation, often referred to as Generation Y, which includes individuals born between 1982 and 2000 (Brosdahl and Carpenter, 2011). Millennials are frequently portrayed as tech-savvy, possessing a high degree of digital literacy, and avidly embracing the internet and its social aspects (Ivanova et al., 2019). They are known for their strong commitment to social values, as well as their concerns about food safety and environmental sustainability (Deloitte, 2018). Moreover, they are willing to pay extra for organic products, as highlighted by the Organic Trade Association (2016).

For millennials, their choices in organic food consumption are influenced more by health benefits, perceived value, etc, rather than just possessing knowledge (Madan, 2017; Hassan, Yee, and Ray, 2015). When it matters most, millennials are willing to invest more in products they believe in. Consequently, if marketers can establish trust in the organic food sector, consumers from this generation may be more inclined to pay a premium for such products. Therefore, it is of outmost importance to explore the intricate relationships between environmental concerns, sensory appeal, attitudes, trustworthiness, willingness to pay a premium, and purchase intentions in the context of organic food.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

In past studies, the variable such as organic knowledge, health consciousness, environmental consciousness, lifestyle, product attributes, product availability product quality found as significant variables in predicting purchase intention of consumers. Few past studies in developed country-specific to millennial consumers have concluded that sensory appeal, trust in organic food, subjective and perceived norms, willingness to pay price premium have a significant impact on millennials' buying intention of organic food. In our knowledge, very few studies have made an attempt to reveal this in the setting of a developing country such as India. Therefore, the results of the study aids in knowing factors affecting millennials' buying intentions of organic food.

Purchase intention

A review of recent literature reveals various factors influencing millennials' purchase intentions and sustainable consumption of organic food. In Ni Made Dewi Ayu Murti's study in the "Jurnal Optimasi Sistem Industri" (2022), environmental knowledge, environmental awareness, health awareness, and social awareness emerge as significant drivers of millennial interest in organic food. Nelson Geovany Carrión Bósquez, in "British Food Journal" (2022), highlights the relevance of subjective attitudes and norms among Ecuadorian university millennials in shaping their purchase intentions for organic products. B. Tan's research in "Foods" (2022) suggests that response efficacy and attitude play a positive role in influencing organic food purchase intentions. Furthermore, N. Ahmed's work in the "Journal of Environmental Planning and Management" (2020) demonstrates the mediating effect of environmental concerns in connecting attitude to young consumers' purchase intentions for organic food. Lastly, S. Lian's study in the "International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences" (2019) provides empirical evidence from a developing nation on the motives and purchase behavior of young consumers regarding organic food. These papers collectively underline the importance of environmental awareness, attitudes, and social norms in driving millennials' intentions to purchase and consume organic food.

Attitude towards organic food purchase intention

The studies discussed in these papers collectively shed light on various aspects of young consumers' purchase intentions and behavior regarding organic food. Pham (2019) emphasizes the

significance of perceived barriers in impeding both attitude and purchase intention towards organic food, while Carrión Bósquez (2022) points out the influence of subjective attitudes and norms among Ecuadorian university millennials on their purchase intentions for organic products. Ahmed (2020) contributes by highlighting the positive effect of attitude on young consumers' purchase intentions, especially concerning environmental concerns and awareness. Additionally, Michaelidou (2008) discusses the role of ethical self-identity in predicting both attitudes and intentions to purchase organic produce. Furthermore, Chaturvedi (2022) underscores how awareness and knowledge lead to health-consciousness, altering consumer preferences in favor of organic food over conventional options. Similarly, Rana (2017) identifies a growing preference for organic food among health-conscious consumers. Shaharudin (2010) addresses the influence of perceived value and health consciousness on customer purchase intention in Malaysia. Lastly, Rengeswari (specific publication year not mentioned) likely focuses on customer purchase intentions toward organic products in Sivakasi, although further specific details are needed. These studies collectively provide a comprehensive overview of factors influencing the purchase behavior and intentions of young consumers in relation to organic food.

Sensory appeal

In the extensive literature on organic food products, several key factors are highlighted. Ismail Tamer Toklu explores millennials' purchase intentions for organic food through a literature review on sensory appeal. Additionally, C. Brennan's work in 2002 highlights the importance of sensory attributes in maintaining repeated purchases of organic food, while M. Victor's study in 2020 delves into consumers' perceptions of organic food. These diverse studies collectively emphasize the significance of factors like perceived value, health consciousness, environmental concern, trust, and sensory attributes in influencing consumer purchase intentions and behaviors regarding organic food products across various regions and demographics.

Perceived Value

Perceived value encompasses consumers' assessment of the benefits they receive compared to the costs incurred (Hoyos-Vallejo et al., 2023). In the context of organic food, millennials may evaluate whether the perceived health and environmental benefits of organic products justify the potentially higher prices. This concept is integral in understanding why millennials choose organic over conventional options (Lavuri, 2022; Shukla, 2019).This perception of value not only considers the tangible attributes of the product but also includes the intangible factors, such as the sense of contributing to sustainability and personal health, which can be particularly relevant for millennials who are conscious of the environmental impact of their consumption choices (Lavuri, 2022). It also reflects the alignment of the product with their values and ethical considerations, adding a layer of complexity to their purchase intentions.

Subjective Norms

The purchase intention of university millennials regarding organic food products is a multifaceted phenomenon influenced by various factors. Carrión Bósquez (2022) found that subjective attitudes and norms among Ecuadorian university millennials play a significant role in shaping their purchase intentions for organic products. Moreover, Ahmed (2020) highlighted the mediating effect of environmental concerns, indicating that these concerns positively influence the relationship between attitude and young consumers' intentions to purchase organic food. Building on this, Tan (2022) emphasized the role of response efficacy and attitude in positively influencing organic food purchase intention. Additionally, Pham (2019) provided valuable insights into the purchase behavior of young consumers in emerging market economies, shedding light on the broader context within which millennials make decisions about organic food purchases. These studies collectively contribute to understanding the intricate interplay of subjective norms, attitudes, environmental concerns, and response efficacy in shaping millennials' intentions to purchase organic food products.

Trust in organic food

The study by Guangjia Zheng in "Foods" (2021) investigates the purchase behavior of Generation Y in Bangladesh regarding organic foods. It reveals that trust consciousness play significant moderating roles in the relationship between purchase intention and actual purchase of organic foods among young consumers in Bangladesh. In George Lăzăroiu's research published in "Frontiers in Public Health" (2019), the prohibitive nature of organic food production is discussed, where farmers struggle to achieve significant crop productivity.

Nelson Geovany Carrión Bósquez's work in the "British Food Journal" (2022) emphasizes the influence of subjective attitudes and norms on the purchase intentions of Ecuadorian university millennials regarding organic products. Ahsan Sadiq's study in 2015 highlights consumer awareness of organic foods, indicating that consumers believe they are informed about organic products. Furthermore, in "Consumer Purchase Intention towards Organic Foods" by S. Shrestha (2020), it's noted that environmental concern, trust, and product availability are essential predictors motivating organic food purchase intention. K. Wang explores Taiwanese customers' organic food purchase intention in a 2017 study, focusing on the role of subjective norms in driving respondents' intentions. Lastly, E. Nica's research in "SHS Web of Conferences" (2020) discusses the cognitive and affective attitudes as drivers of purchase intentions toward environmentally friendly products. These studies collectively offer insights into various factors influencing the purchase behavior and intentions of consumers, with a particular focus on trust, price consciousness, environmental concerns, and subjective norms in the context of organic food consumption among different demographics and regions.

Willingness to pay Price Premium

The literature on consumers' willingness to pay a premium price for organic foods reveals several key factors influencing this behavior. Family characteristics, attitudes, safety perceptions, and risk

barriers have been identified as significant determinants of purchase intention and the willingness to pay more for organic products (Cao Của et al., 2021). Additionally, the subjective attitudes and norms of specific consumer segments, such as university millennials, play a crucial role in shaping their purchase intentions for organic items (Nelson Geovany Carrión Bósquez, 2022). Furthermore, factors like environmental knowledge, health awareness, and social consciousness are essential for the millennial generation's sustainable consumption of organic food (Ni Made Dewi Ayu Murti, 2022). Perceived barriers, including concerns related to food safety and environmental issues, have been found to impede purchase intentions for organic food (Thu Huong Pham et al., 2019). Finally, health consciousness and perceived value play a role in influencing purchase intentions in specific contexts, such as Malaysia (Mohd Rizaimy Shaharudin, 2010), and the perspective of millennials can offer additional insights into the willingness to pay a premium price for organic food (B. Tan, 2022). These factors collectively contribute to our understanding of consumers' willingness to pay a premium for organic foods.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of the study are as follows:-

- To study the effect of sensory appeal, perceived value and subjective norms on millennials' attitude towards organic food
- To evaluate the role of attitude on millennials' purchase intention.
- To examine the effect of trust in organic food on millennials' purchase intention.
- To assess the influencing role of willingness to pay premium price on millennials' purchase intention.

HYPOTHESIS OF THE STUDY

H1: Consumers' attitude towards organic food significantly influences their intentions to purchase organic food

H2: Sensory appeal significantly influences the consumers' attitude towards organic food.

H3: Subjective norms significantly influences the consumer's attitude towards organic food.

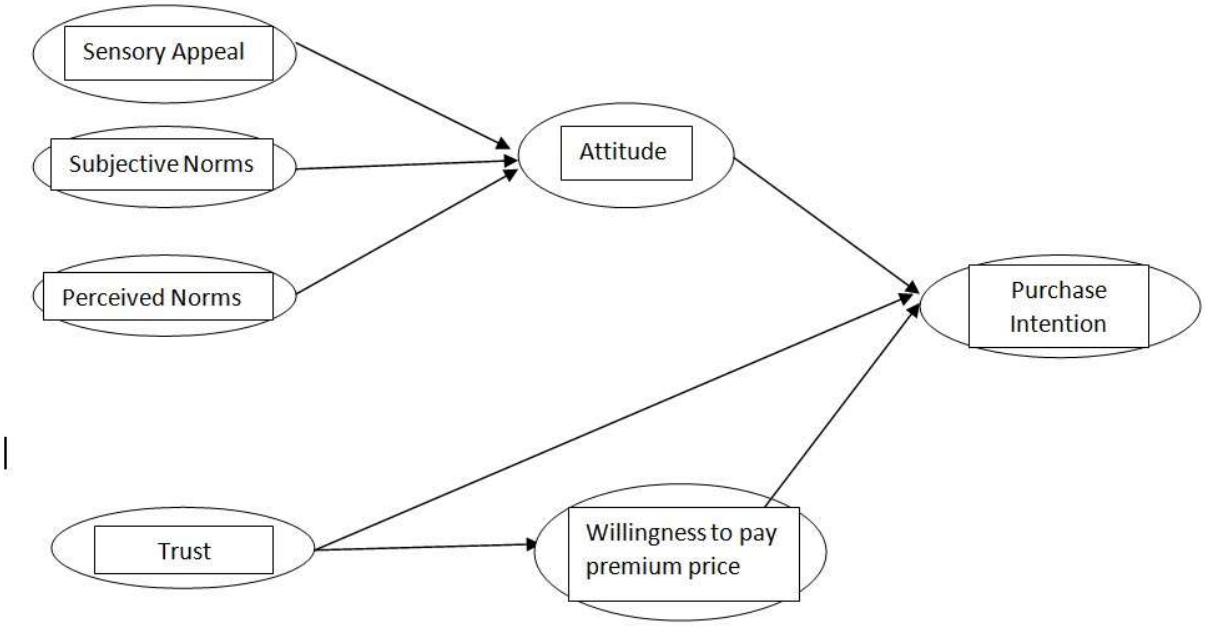
H4: Perceived norms significantly influences the consumers' attitude towards organic food.

H5: Trust in organic food is significantly influence consumers' purchase intentions.

H6: Trust in organic food is significantly influence consumers' willingness to pay price premium

H7: Willingness to pay price premium for organic food significantly influence consumers' purchase intentions.

PROPOSED RESEARCH MODEL



METHODOLOGY

SAMPLE DESIGN AND DATA COLLECTION

For this purpose, a questionnaire was administered to a sample of 480 respondents out of which 282 drawn for the four districts of West Bengal region to examine the relationship between the constructs. Rule of 10 proposed by (Nunnally & Bernstein, I.H., 1984), states that for conducting SEM the sample size must be ten times the indicators present in the model. Hence, this study should contain minimum of 210 samples (21 indicators by 10 observations). Actual sample size collected is 525 observations. Therefore, the sample size is adequate. A pilot study was conducted initially to check the validity and reliability compliance of the questionnaire then finally, Primary data was collected using stratified random sampling method for respondents who were between 27 years to 42years. The items in the questionnaire were designed on a five-point Likert scale, where 1= strongly agree and 5= strongly disagree, along with the demographic questions

MEASURES

Based on the previous studies the questions were framed for individual constructs. Attitude toward organic food product was assessed with three-items adopted Taylor & Todd (1995). subjective norm and perceived value was adopted from the three-item scale from(Asioli,2011) . Three items adopted from Chen (2007) were used to measure sensory appeal. Trust in organic food was measured by the three-item scale from Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001). Willingness to pay price premium was assessed by the three-item scale taken from Leong and Ng (2014). Finally, purchase intention was taken from three-items scales of Michalidou & Hassan (2008), and Lin (2007).

DATA ANALYSIS

The collected data was imported into spss software. The collected data was checked for any missing values. Further on, the data was directly subjected to the cfa analysis using Amos software. The criteria for goodness of fit, validity and reliability were checked. A multivariate analytical technique known as structural equational modeling is employed to evaluate structural relationship between constructs in the proposed model. It is most widely used with the help of observed variable to examine the relationship between latent variables. The present study uses SEM to test the hypothesis based on the research model being proposed. Within this study, SEM plays a pivotal role in hypothesis testing based on our proposed research model. Leveraging Gaskin plugins, we enhance the analytical capabilities of SEM, enabling a more thorough scrutiny and interpretation of complex relationships within our dataset. This advanced analytical approach transcends numerical assessments, allowing us to uncover and comprehend the intricate interplay between variables in our research domain.

RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY MEASUREMENT

For assessment of reliability, Cronbach coefficient alpha is a widely accepted choice and most reported statistics (Rosnow and Rosenthal, 1992). In most literature $\alpha = 0.7$ or more ensures having reliability (Hair et al., 1998). In addition to this, the Composite Reliability (CR) score was calculated to confirm that constructs used in the present study were reliable. Table 1 clearly shows that all construct's value of Cronbach alpha is greater than 0.7, and the CR score is higher than 0.60 confirms that constructs in the present study were reliable (refer Table 1). To establish composite reliability, CR score for all the constructs should exceed 0.60 (Hair et al., 1998). Furthermore, to establish validity for the study, convergent and discriminant validity were measured. The average variance extracted (AVE) value exceeds 0.50 is widely accepted measures for convergent validity presence in the study (Fornell and Larcker, 1981

Table 1 – Measurement Item and Reliability

Constructs and Source	Items	Cronbach Alpha	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted
Sensory appeal (Chen, 2007)	Organic food taste good	0.873	0.873	0.697
	Organic food smell nice			
	Organic food have a pleasant texture			
Perceived value (Asioli, 2011)	I think it's easy for me to buy organic food	0.885	0.886	0.722
	It's mostly upto me whether or not to buy organic food			

	If I wanted to, i could buy organic food instead of non organic food			
Subjective norms (Asioli, 2011)	Most people I value would buy organic food rather than non-organic food	0.873	0.696	0.280
	My family thinks that I should buy organic food rather than non organic food			
	Most friends whose opinions regarding diet are important to me think that I should buy organic food			
Trust (Chaudhuri and Holbrook, 2001)	I have trust in organic food	0.889	0.763	0.328
	This organic food is safe			
	This organic food is reliable			
Attitude (Taylor & Todd, 1995)	I like to purchase organic food	0.906	0.896	0.735
	Purchasing organic food is a good idea			
	Purchasing organic food would be pleasant for me			
Willingness to pay premium price (Leong and Ng, 2014)	I am willing to pay a higher price for organic products	0.890	0.731	0.256
	I will continue to buy organic products without affect by the price changes			
	Buying organic food is the right thing to do even if they cost more			
Purchase intention (Lin, 2007; Michalidou	If organic food was available, I would buy it	0.900	0.753	0.328
	It is likely that I will purchase organic food			
	I plan to buy organic food			

and Hassan, 2008)				

Note: CR – Composite reliability, AVE – Average variance explained

The overall measurement model was a good fit as all the indices for measurement model are within the threshold limit. Enlisted indicators of goodness-of-fit statistics measures were all in the excellent criteria $\chi2$= 264.378; $\chi2$/df = 1.573; p= 0.000; SRMR=0.055; RMSEA=0.045; CFI =0.975; NFI=0.936; TLI=0.969; PNFI=0.748, and PCFI=0.780 adopted from Hair et al. (2006, 1998) and Hu and Bentler (1995).

Table 2: Reliability and Validity Measurement

	PI	**PN**	**AT**	**SN**	**WPP**	**TR**	**SA**
PI	**0.868**						
PN	0.562***	**0.850**					
AT	0.495***	0.315***	**0.857**				
SN	0.530***	0.374***	0.319***	**0.834**			
WPP	0.506***	0.324***	0.388***	0.306***	**0.855**		
TR	0.573***	0.438***	0.383***	0.481***	0.371***	**0.874**	
SA	0.365***	0.303***	0.262***	0.217***	0.287***	0.315***	**0.835**

Note: AT- Attitude, SA- Sensory appeal, SN- Subjective Norms , PN- Perceived Norms , T- Trust in organic food, WPP-Willingness to pay price premium, PI- Purchase Intention *p<0.001

Table 2 indicates that AVE scores above the threshold and the square roots of the AVE is higher than IC score confirms the presence of both convergent and discriminant validity.

Structural Model

The structural model has been validated and adopted as the final stage of the study. Figure 2 represents the path. The result shows that the research model is good to fit. Enlisted indicators of goodness-of-fit statistics measures were above all acceptable criteria $\chi2$=342.612 ; $\chi2$/df =1.946 ; p = 0.000; GFI = 0.897; AGFI=0.865; SRMR=0.099; RMR= 0.174; RMSEA=0.058; CFI =0.957; NFI=0.917; TLI=0.949; PNFI=0.768; PGFI=0.684 and PCFI=0.802 adopted from Hair et al. (2006, 1998) and Hu and Bentler (1995).

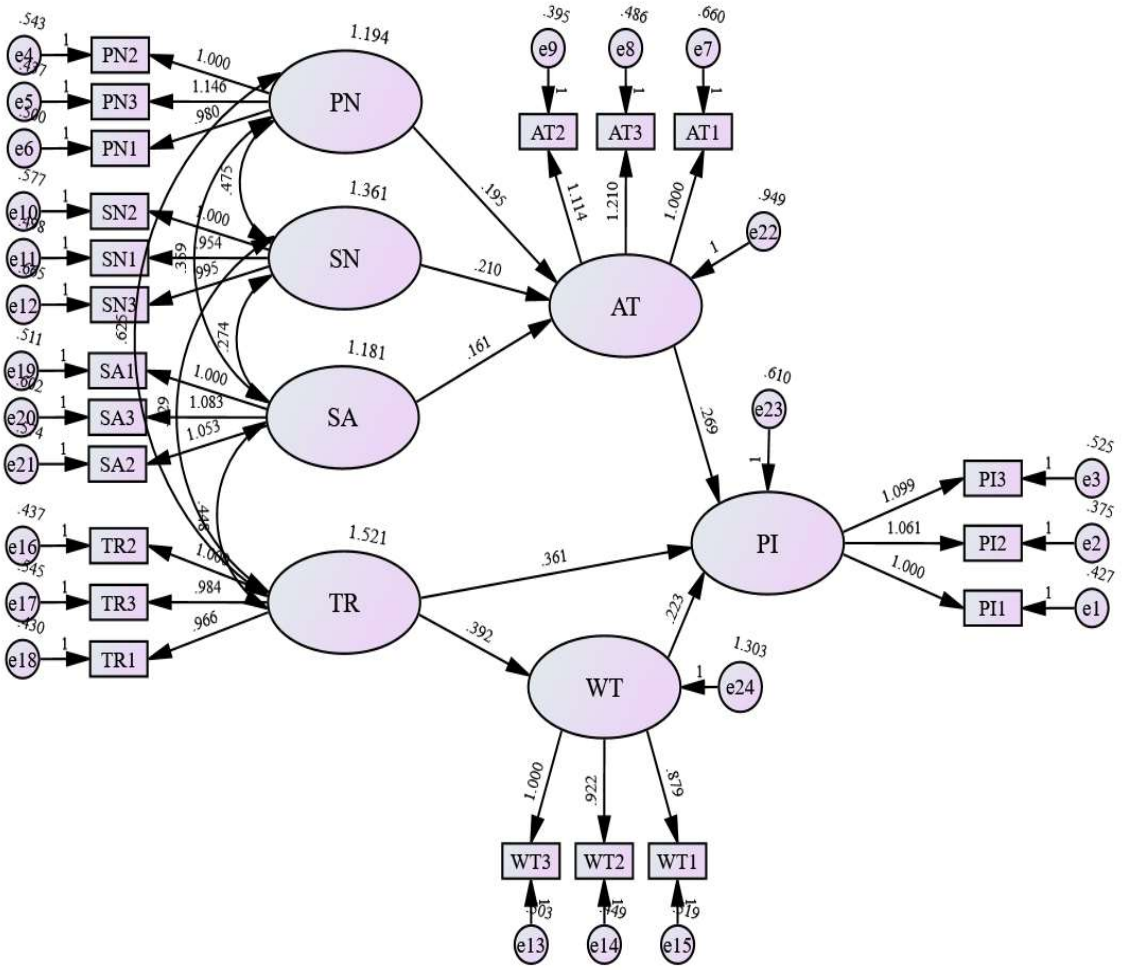


Table 3 : Result of Hypotheses Testing

Hypothesis	Relationship	Standardise Estimates(B)	S.E	t-value	p-value	Result
H1	PN-->AT	0.197	0.070	2.779	.005	Supported
H2	SN-->AT	0.227	0.065	3.250	.001	Supported
H3	SA-->AT	0.162	0.066	2.416	.016	Supported
H4	TR-->WT	0.390	0.065	6.049	***	Supported
H5	AT-->PI	0.270	0.056	4.820	***	Supported
H6	TR-->PI	0.416	0.054	6.698	***	Supported
H7	WT-->PI	0.258	0.051	4.381	***	Supported

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The results of hypothesis testing reveal that perceived norms (b = 0.297, p = 0.000), subjective norms (b = 0.227, p = 0.001), and sensory appeal (b = 0.162, p = 0.016) all have a positive impact

on consumers' attitudes towards organic organic food products. This finding aligns with previous studies (Tam et al., 2018; Onel, 2017).

Furthermore, both attitude (b = 0.270, p = 0.000) and willingness to pay a premium price (b = 0.258, p = 0.000) exhibit a positive influence on purchase intention. This implies that having a favourable attitude towards organic food products and a willingness to pay a premium price significantly enhance consumers' intention to make a purchase.

In addition to these findings, trust in organic food also plays a crucial role. It has a substantial and positive impact on consumers' willingness to pay a premium (b = 0.390, p = 0.000) and their purchase intention (b = 0.416, p = 0.000). This indicates that when consumers trust organic products, they are more inclined to pay a premium for them and are more likely to intend to purchase. These collective results provide strong evidence supporting the importance of trust, attitude, and willingness to pay in influencing consumers' organic food purchase decisions. The R2 value in the dimension of purchase intention of organic food in the model is 0.61, consider as having good explanatory power.

MARKETING IMPLICATIONS

The findings of this research hold significant practical implications for both marketers and policymakers in the organic food industry. Firstly, it is crucial for marketers to recognize the pivotal role of perceived norms, societal norms, and sensory appeal in shaping consumers' attitudes towards organic food. Strategies aimed at highlighting these aspects could effectively boost consumer positivity towards organic products. Additionally, fostering trust in organic food products is imperative, as it not only encourages consumers to pay a premium but also drives purchase intentions. This emphasizes the need for transparent labelling and certification processes to build and maintain consumer trust. Furthermore, understanding that favourable attitudes and a willingness to pay more are strong drivers of purchase intentions underscores the importance of marketing efforts that emphasize the benefits of organic food and justify premium pricing. Overall, these findings provide actionable insights for stakeholders to enhance their marketing strategies and ultimately promote the adoption of organic food products

LIMITATIONS

The study was conducted in specific context of the west Bengal region so the findings may not be generalised to other geographic areas or cultural settings. Additionally the research focused on a specific age group 27-42 years, which could limit the applicability of the result to a broader demography. Furthermore the research model did not consider the external factors or variables that could influence consumer behaviour such as economical conditions or cultural factors. Future research in this area could employ longitudinal or experimental designs to establish causal relationships, expand the sample to include a more diverse demographic, and consider external contextual factors to provide a more comprehensive understanding of consumer behavior toward organic food. Furthermore, exploring the role of marketing strategies and communication channels in influencing consumer attitudes and behaviors related to organic food could be a promising

avenue for future research. The study primarily used quantitave method and a more comprehensive approach involving qualitative research or in depth interviews could provide a deeper understanding of consumer perceptions and motivations.

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