



## What Motivates Young Indian Consumers to Buy Organic Food?

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### ABSTRACT

Young people in India might be expected to contribute substantially to the demand for organic food. Yet little empirical research has been undertaken on the factors that drive organic food purchase of young Indians, and how organic food purchase intentions translate into purchase behavior. Drawing on the theory of planned behavior and informed by consumer behavior literature, this paper presents a model with five antecedents of organic food purchase intention and its relationship with purchase behavior. Survey data were obtained from 401 students at higher education institutions in North India. Through structural equation modeling attitude toward organic food purchases and subjective norms were found to significantly influence organic food purchase intention. Organic food purchase intention was found to strongly predict organic food purchase behavior. The research findings may assist Indian and international organic food producers and marketers in fine-tuning their strategies toward the particular demographic of young Indian buyers.

### KEYWORDS

Young consumers;  
theory of planned behavior;  
organic food purchase  
intention; organic food  
purchase behavior

### Introduction

Over the past few decades, consumers realize that their buying behavior has a direct impact on the environment (Laroche, Bergeron, and Barbaro-Forleo 2001). To sustain the environment, consumers are being called upon to adopt ecologically sound behaviors (Chen and Chang 2012), including the consumption of organic food (OF). OF is widely understood to help reduce the deleterious environmental impacts of the food industry (Żakowska-Biemans and Renko 2011). Compared with conventional food, OF improves plant nutrition and soil management (Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority 2015) and provides health benefits to consumers (Paul and Rana 2012).

While the market for OF is expanding globally, consumer demand in developing nations lags demand in developed nations (Kushwah, Dhir, and Sagar 2019a), particularly in India (ASSOCHAM & EY 2018; UNDP. 2018). A focus on OF-related consumer behavior in India is

warranted for several reasons. India is the fifth-largest and one of the fastest-growing large economies in the world (International Monetary Fund 2020). The country has the highest number of OF producers (about 835,000) globally, whereby most are small and marginal (Willer and Lernoud 2018). OF production is characterized by the country's numerous agro-climatic areas and its inherited practice of organic agriculture (Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority 2015). Of the US\$80 billion in global OF retail sales in 2016, India's annual domestic OF retail sales were just US\$150 million (Willer and Lernoud 2018). From this low base, Indian consumers have started showing interest in OF, and the demand in the retail sector in India is gradually rising (Sadiq, Paul, and Bharti 2020; Chandra and Rosmann 2020; Boobalan and Nachimuthu 2020). However, there is still a big gap (referred to as the "green gap") between Indian consumers' attitudes toward OF and their OF purchase intentions, on the one

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