

## Measuring the Impact of Environmental Knowledge towards Intention to Buying Organic Food Products in Tier-II Cities of India

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### Abstract

In this paper, researchers have attempted to draw inferences from the populace of a major city of Uttar Pradesh, India, named Kanpur. Aka the industrial capital of Uttar Pradesh, one of the 30 states of India having a population more than that of the countries like Pakistan, Bangladesh and every country in Africa, Europe, and South America. The city in reference is home to nearly 5 million people, with chequered income groups and a representative of a typical urban, semi-urban North Indian purchase behaviour. The present work is to see the validity of TPB and its extended form to predict the Indian consumers' purchase intention toward organic food products, considering the changes in terms of increased health consciousness, food awareness and income levels.

**Keywords:** Organic, Food, Environment, Intention, TPB

### 1. Introduction

Environmentalism has become more prevalent since the 1990s as consumers became aware of the environmental impacts of their consumption. As a result, they are more likely to purchase more sustainable products. This shift towards conscious consumerism expects to influence their purchase decisions. While satisfying personal needs remain central to consumer behaviour, environmental preservation has also become primary. About sustainability, balancing the ecosystem (ecological), profit-generation (economic) and people (social) is a core concern. This increased interest in sustainable consumption will influence purchase decisions. Increasing awareness of sustainable consumption might significantly impact consumer purchase decisions.

Global Organic food sales surpassed the 100 billion USD mark for the first time in 2018. As per the reports, the market is now at 105.5 billion USD, starting from almost nothing in the

1990s. North America still constitutes nearly half the global demand, and China and India continue as large producers and exporters of organic products and have only recently developed sizeable internal markets (FiBL & IFOAM - Organic International, 2020). As evident, the organic food market is picking up very fast both nationally and internationally; multitudes of factors make India a peculiar case. Maximum numbers of organic producers (FiBL & IFOAM - Organic International, 2020), rising per-capita income (Weforum, 2019), an ages-old legacy of bio-dynamic farming and focused agricultural reforms are some of the important ones.

Approposing the case of developing countries like India, the gross national income (G.N.I.) per capita data from the world bank report reflects a steep rise for India from 2002 to 2015 towards organic food consumption (Weforum, 2019a).

“Organic food market is projected to grow at a CAGR of over 23% by 2023, on account of

favorable government policies supporting organic farming coupled with rising land area under organic cultivation. Online availability of organic food products and shifting consumer preference towards organic food are among the major factors expected to boost demand for organic food products in India during the forecast period. Expanding marketing and distribution channels coupled with the increasing number of health-conscious people is also anticipated to fuel organic food consumption in India until 2022" (Techscisearch, 2020). Upper middle- and high-income groups in India saw a similar and multifold increase in numbers from 16 million in 2005 to 61 million in 2018 (from 7% to 21%, upper-middle-class income group) and from 1 Million to 8 million (1% to 3%, High Income Group), respectively, for the similar period. The 2030 forecast also indicates the same trend to continue. The lower-middle-income group is also swelling at the cost of low-income group numbers (Weforum, 2019b).

Organic food products are available at premium prices to consumers, and various researches confirm that price plays a role as a significant hindrance in organic food purchase (Aschemann-Witzel & Zielke, 2017). As organic food consumption is pretty a new concept in developing countries compared to their developed counterparts, it would be interesting to study the various aspects of organic food purchase intention in developing nations like India. In most of the researches on Increased food Awareness (Basha et al., 2015), health concerns (Rana & Paul, 2020), environmental knowledge and concerns (Maichum et al., 2016), rising income levels (Dangi, Gupta, et al., 2020) and better food provenance tools (Wee et al., 2014) are amongst the host of significant drives or motives for consumers to purchase organic food globally. Moreover, people generally have a positive attitude towards organic food (Vermeir & Verbeke, 2006). Many research papers have established a correlation between income and organic food purchases (Dangi, Narula, et al., 2020; Deliana, 2012). It demonstrates that India is a potential market for the organic food industry, where the domestic demand is likely to take off. Also, India is an interesting case to study the organic food purchase intention and behaviour of consumers for various reasons. First, with a growth expectation of 11.5% in

2021, India is poised at becoming the fastest-growing trillion-dollar economy in the world (Nasdaq, 2021). Second, India is home to the maximum number of organic farmers in the world (PIB, 2021).

Therefore, the present study investigates consumer intention and buying behaviour about organic food products in one of the tier-II cities in India like Agra, Kanpur, Prayagraj, Lucknow, Ghaziabad, Gorakhpur etc., each having population between 4- 5 million. These densely populated cities of Uttar Pradesh state of India have a rich cultural background. They are known for their peculiar behaviour pattern with the help of the theory of planned behaviour.

### ***1.1 Incorporation of new constructs to TPB Model***

Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) is accepted widely among social psychologists, researchers and theorists as a tool to predict the behavioral intentions of consumers (Chakrabarti, 2010);(Liao et al., 2007); (Taufique & Vaithianathan, 2018); (Voon et al., 2011). TPB framework extends the theory of reasoned action (T.R.A.) (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1988), which adds perceived behaviour control to the base predictive model. Intentions are believed to be actualized by behaviour and motivation (Patch et al., 2005) and fully mediate the impact of P.C.B., attitude and subjective norms (Liobikiene et al., 2016); (Ajzen, 2002a). Academicians and researchers have extended the TPB model overtime to make it more capable of predicting purchase behaviour (Han & Kim, 2010; Maichum et al., 2016). The present study has also attempted to include new constructs (Environmental concern and Environment Knowledge) in the TPB, taking support from the extant literature.

#### ***1.1.1 Environmental Knowledge (E.K.)***

Numerous studies have shown the importance of environmental knowledge and the impact of lack of knowledge on consumers' decision-making process. (Laroche et al., 2001) found influence of knowledge, values and attitude on environmental awareness and behaviour, knowledge about environment influences pro-environmental attitude, resulting in environmentally responsible consumer behaviour (Moisander, 2000). Further, the state of one's knowledge about an issue significantly

impacts decision-making. Specifically, people dislike and thus tend to avoid situations with insufficient knowledge to guide their behaviour and where the possibility of confusion is excellent (Kaplan, 1991). This lack of knowledge can be attributed to their indifferent behaviour towards many environmental issues like engaging in sustainable consumption practices, ecofriendly product purchase considerations etc.

Moreover, Stutzman & Green (1982a) posit that factual knowledge about the environment precludes environmental attitude. But this factual knowledge about the environment must not directly affect ecological behaviour as the effect of environmental knowledge is accentuated both by environmental attitude and environmentally conscious behavioral intention to reach environmental or ecological behaviour in the TPB model. Therefore, it is established by various researchers that there is no relationship between factual environmental knowledge and ecological behaviour (Amelang et al., 1977; Maloney et al., 1975; Maloney & Ward, 1973; Schahn & Holzer 1990). However, a moderate relationship between environmental knowledge and ecological behaviour has also been established by various researchers (Arbuthnot, 1977; Dispoto, 1977; Hines, 1987; Oskamp et al., 1991; Smythe & Brook, 1980; Stutzman & Green, 1982b). A relatively strong relationship between ecological behaviour and ecological behaviour is established. The discussion leads to hypotheses H1, H2, and H3.

H1. Environmental knowledge and attitude positively influence consumer intention towards organic food.

H2. Environmental knowledge and subjective norms positively influence consumer intention towards organic food.

H3. Environmental Knowledge and P.B.C. positively influence consumer intention towards organic food.

### 1.2 About TPB

The Theory of Reasoned Action (T.R.A.) claims significant predictive precision of an individual's attitudes towards performing the behaviour in question through the intervening effect of behavioral intention. The essential attitudes in this process are specific to the specific behaviour in the study; it is not

sufficient to consider the individual's attitudes more generally (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1988; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). The theory also postulates that social pressures or "subjective norms" significantly influence a person's intentions about performing a behaviour. Which ultimately determine whether they will do so, which arise from their perceptions of what others will think about them performing the conduct in question (Vallerand et al., 1992). The T.R.A. model depicts that both personal attitudes and social or "normative" factors directly influence behavioral intentions, the strongest predictor of actual behaviour. All other factors in the external environment influence behaviour indirectly through their influence on attitudes and subjective norms (Chen et al., 2012). However, T.R.A. aims to explain the volition. Its explanatory scope excludes a wide range of spontaneous, impulsive, habitual, and cravings scripted on mindlessness (Bentler & Speckart, 1979; Langer, 1989). The T.R.A. also excludes from its scope Those behavior's that may require special skills, unique opportunities or resources, or the cooperation of others to be performed (Liska, 1984).

Criticism of T.R.A. by various authors can be categorized into three broad categories: the relationship between attitudes and normative beliefs, the sufficiency of T.R.A. components as predictors of intentions and behaviors, and the limited range of meaning covered by the theory. Therefore, Ajzen (1985) proposed TPB to predict and explain behaviour that is not entirely under volitional control. Ajzen insisted that T.R.A. reasonably predicted volition behaviours. T.R.A. was complemented by the Perceived Behavior Control (P.B.C.) to predict and explain even the behaviour not under volitional control of the actor. Perceived Behavior Control (P.B.C.) is "one's perception of how easy or difficult it is to perform the behaviour" (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993). Ajzen (1991) defended P.B.C. as different from a few of similar constructs like general disposition (Atkinson & Cartwright, 1964), locus of control (Rotter, 1966), and closest Bandura's self-efficacy construct (Bandura & Schunk, 1981).

Further, 'Attitude' describes as an effective and balanced response toward performing some behaviour and not toward some generalized attitude object. 'Subjective Norm' is defined as

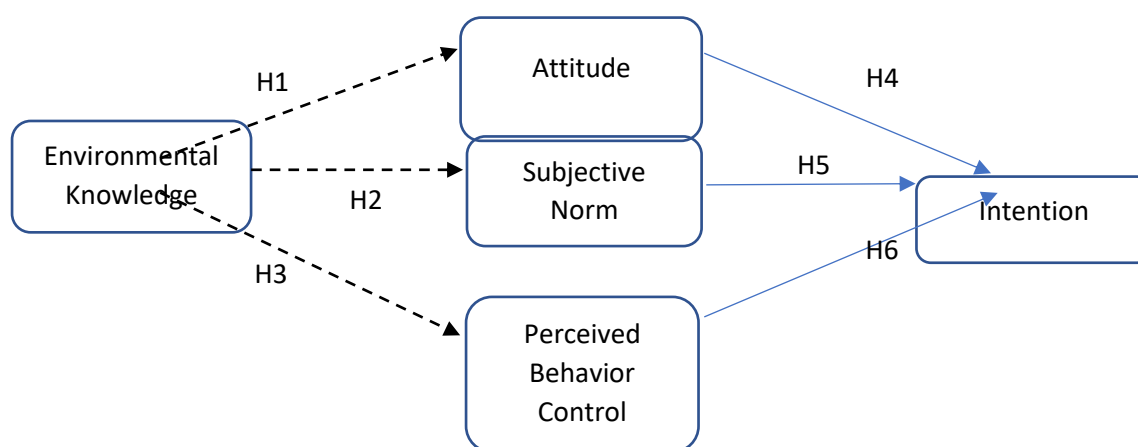
'perceived social pressure to perform or not perform the behaviour'. At the same time, perceived behaviour control functions control beliefs and perceived power. Control beliefs are once related to the presence or absence of the resources and opportunities required for the performance of the behaviour. Perceived power is the ability of the control attribute to facilitate or inhibit the performance of the behaviour" (Dillard & Pfau, 2002). TPB, since then, has been used by many authors and researchers in predicting behavioral intention. Eagly & Chaiken (1993) concluded that TPB could be used successfully at the places where T.R.A. was found to be less appropriate (p. 189). Based on this discussion, the following hypotheses can be proposed.

H5. Consumers' attitude towards organic food positively influences their intention to purchase organic food.

H6. Subjective norm significantly influences the consumer's intention to purchase organic food.

H7. Perceived behavioral control significantly increases consumer intentions to purchase organic food.

Based on the above discussion, a research framework has been developed (see Figure 1) that shows the theoretical framework used in the study.



**Figure 1. Theoretical Framework**

## 2 Materials and Methods

The questionnaire was designed by adopting items from relevant literature. Items were measured using a 5-point Likert's scale, where 5 indicates a Strongly Agree and 1 represents a Strongly Disagree. Some questions were reversed scored with an aim to be consistent with the direction throughout the scale. In this paper researchers have attempted to draw inferences from the populace of a major city of Uttar Pradesh, India named Kanpur, aka the industrial capital of Uttar Pradesh, one of the 30 states of India. A state of India having population more than that of the countries like Pakistan, Bangladesh and every country in Africa, Europe, and South America. The city in reference is home to nearly 5 million people, with chequered income groups and a representative of a typical urban, semi-urban North Indian purchase behavior. The

respondents comprised young adults (18-30 years), chosen based on convenience from the districts mentioned above. The questionnaire was pilot tested among the population; few revisions were made in the questionnaire based on their recommendations. Further, a total of 250 questionnaires were distributed in both the districts using the group administration approach for on-the-spot completion of the survey. Group administered questionnaires allow rapid data collection and high response (Adler & Clark, 2006). A total of 243 questionnaires were returned, representing a high return rate, i.e., 97.2%. At the end, 194 usable responses were considered, eliminating the incomplete responses and extreme outliers. Kline (2011) suggested that there should be at least 10 cases per parameter. Therefore, a sample size of 194 suffices the research as the study comprises 16 items. The final sample of 194 meets this initial condition. Table 1

provides the demographic composition of the sample. The theoretical framework was analyzed using SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Science) and AMOS (Analysis of Moment Structure) version 23. Two study model of S.E.M. was followed in the study

(Hair, Anderson, Tatham, & Black, 1998). Firstly, the measurement model was used to test the validity and reliability of the model and later on the structural model was tested for the model fit and hypothesis testing.

Table I: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents (N=194)

Demographic Variables	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	160	82.47
	Female	34	17.53
Age	25-30 Years	33	17.01
	31-36 Years	97	50
	37-42 Years	43	22.16
	43-48 Years	11	5.67
	Above 48 Years	10	5.15
Marital Status	Single	87	44.84
	Married	107	55.16
Occupation	Student	29	14.95
	Self Employed	74	38.15
	Government	32	16.50
	Sector	35	18.04
	Private Sector	24	12.36
	Others		

### 3 Results and Analysis

The measurement Model provides the quantitative measures of the validity and reliability for the constructs. Using Cronbach's alpha, internal consistency among the items was measured; the score ranges from .780 to .908, which lies between the acceptable limit of .7 and higher (Hair et al., 1998). Further, the convergent and discriminant validity were measured. Convergent validity was measured based on three components: composite reliability

(C.R.), factor loading and Average Variance Extracted (A.V.E.). The value of composite reliability ranged from .69 to .89 which implies

that all constructs met the recommended criterion of .6 and higher (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988). The value of factor loading (0.51 to 0.84) was well above the recommended level of 0.60 (Chin, Gopal, & Salisbury, 1997). The value of A.V.E. ranged from 0.51 to 0.84, which also met the acceptable limit of .5 (Hair et al., 1998). The detail of reliability and convergent validity are outlined in Table 2. The square root of AVE of each construct was larger than the correlation between the constructs, which ensured adequate discriminant validity (Chin, 1998). It can be summarized that the theoretical model represents sufficient validity (convergent and discriminant) and reliability. The details of discriminant validity and descriptive statistics are mentioned in Table 3.

Table 2: Factor Loadings and Composite Reliability

Constructs	Items	Factor Loading	CR
Attitude (ATT)	ATT_1	0.904	0.85
	ATT_2	0.865	
	ATT_3	0.851	
	ATT_4	0.799	
Subjective Norms (SN)	SN_1	0.954	0.91
	SN_2	0.934	

	SN_3	0.861	
Perceived Behavioral Control (PBC)	PBC_1	0.851	
	PBC_2	0.850	0.82
	PBC_3	0.787	
Environment Knowledge (EK)	EK_1	0.887	
	EK_2	0.864	0.86
	EK_3	0.842	
Purchase Intention (PI)	PI_1	0.895	
	PI_2	0.886	0.88
	PI_3	0.859	

Table 3: Discriminant Validity

	AT	PI	SN	EK	PBC
AT	<b>0.718027</b>				
PI	0.383	<b>0.86859</b>			
SN	0.283	0.608	<b>0.917205</b>		
EK	0.33	0.69	0.563	<b>0.864529</b>	
PBC	0.276	0.694	0.682	0.605	<b>0.829873</b>

Notes: ATT= Attitude, SN= Subjective Norms, PBC= Perceived Behavioral Control, EK= Environmental Knowledge, PI= Purchase Intentions

**\*Bold numeric values represent root of AVE**

Further, the theoretical framework was tested for goodness of fit indices. The results showed that goodness of fit statistics of the theoretical framework represents a good fit, as it lies in the acceptable limit ( $X^2= 137.416$ ,  $X^2/df = 1.261$ , Goodness of Fit index (GFI) = 0.878, Adjusted Goodness of fit index (AGFI) = 0.829, Tucker Lewis Index (TLI) = 0.974, Comparative Fit Index (CFI) = 0.979, Incremental Fit Index (IFI) = 0.980, Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) = 0.048). The observed value of AGFI was 0.829, which exceeds the cutoff level of 0.8 (Chau & Hu, 2001). All other fit indices were well above the recommended criteria (Bagozzi & Yi, 1998). Based on the above results, it can be inferred that the proposed theoretical framework represented a good data fit.

Refer to Table 4, Attitude ( $\beta= 0.168$ ,  $t= 3.334$ ,  $p < .05$ ) and perceived behavioral control ( $\beta = 0.308$ ,  $t= 5.128$ ,  $p < .05$ ) were significant in determining the purchase intention, also subjective norm ( $\beta= .321$ ,  $t=4.813$ ,  $p < .05$ ) found to be significant influence on purchase intention of organic food. Hence hypotheses

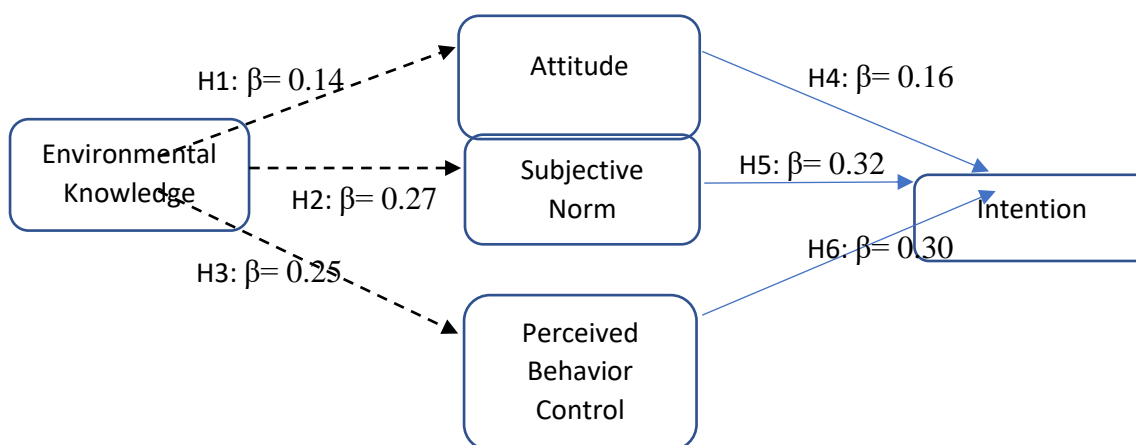
H4, H5 and H6 were supported. Among the TPB variables, Subjective Norm (S.N.) emerged as the most significant determinant of purchasing organic food, followed by perceived behavioral control toward organic food. Further, Environmental Knowledge (H2:  $\beta= 0.270$ ,  $t= 4.550$ ,  $p < .05$ ) had a significant positive influence on the Consumer subjective norm towards organic food purchase, Likewise, Environmental Knowledge (H1:  $\beta= 0.142$ ,  $t= 2.903$ ,  $p < .05$ ) had a significant positive influence on the consumer attitude towards organic food purchase and Environmental Knowledge (H3:  $\beta= 0.252$ ,  $t= 4.642$ ,  $p < .05$ ) had a significant positive influence on the consumer perceived behavioral control towards organic food purchase. Among the Hypotheses H4, H5 and H6, Subjective Norm (H5) emerged as the most significant determinant of purchasing organic food, followed by perceived behavioral control (H6) toward organic food.

#### 4 Discussion

This research aims to understand the relationship between environmental knowledge and the factors of TPB, to understand how much the knowledge about the environment affects the variables of TPB, which further affect buying behaviour and purchase intentions of respondents. The search was conducted especially in a city of Uttar Pradesh with a population of more than 4 million with

chequered income levels and social strata representing the larger mass of the Indian middle class.  $\beta$  value of Subjective Norms (S.N.) towards intention was found to be the highest (0.321), which infers that in the representative population of Indian mindset has started giving value to the quality of the food

they consume, high S.N. value also hints at the establishment of the new norm of evaluating a product more about its worth against the price that it quotes which must be seen as a good sign for the market development of organic food products in India.



**Figure 2. Final Theoretical Framework**

Table 4: Hypothesized Relationship Testing

Hypo	Path Description	Estimate	S.E.	P-Value	Results
H1	Environmental Knowledge Attitude	.413	.142	0.004	Supported
H2	Environmental Knowledge Subjective Norms	1.226	.270	***	Supported
H3	Environmental Knowledge PBC	1.169	.252	***	Supported
H4	Attitude Intention	.560	.168	***	Supported
H5	Subjective norms Intention	1.546	.321	***	Supported
H6	Perceived Behavioral Control Intention	1.567	.0308	***	Supported

Notes: Fit Stats-  $\chi^2/df = 1.261$ ; CFI= 0.979; GFI= 0.878; AGFI =0.829; NFI =0.908; RFI =0.886; TLI= 0.974; RMSEA. =0.048 (\*\*p=0.001)

P.B.C. (Perceived Behavioral Control) reflects the degree to which an individual performs the intended behaviour. It comprises of two attributes: “the degree of control an individual has over behaviour and the confidence an individual feels they have about being able to carry out the behaviour or not” (Maichum et al., 2016),  $\beta$  value of P.B.C. stands second after that of the S.N. indicating the dawn of conscious consumerism among the masses in India. Many studies show that P.B.C. bears direct relation

with intention in various research contexts (Paul et al., 2016).

Environmental knowledge (E.K.) affects attitude, too, positively. Suitable environmental knowledge forms attitude that affects the intention as per the TPB theory (Ajzen, 2002b),  $\beta$  value for attitude, in this case, is good, though being the lowest among the three variables of the T.B.P. model.

The findings reported that the TPB and the proposed theoretical framework represent an excellent data fit (See, Figure 2). But the inclusion of new constructs, i.e., Environmental Knowledge in TPB, has improved the model fit as the explained variance (Adjusted R2) increased from 27.9% (TPB) to 48.6% (proposed framework), which justifies and supports the addition of these new constructs in TPB towards understanding the consumer's intention to purchase organic product in case of an India. The findings reported that the TPB and the proposed theoretical framework represent an excellent data fit. But, the inclusion of new constructs, i.e., Environmental Knowledge (E.K.) in TPB, has improved the model fit as the explained variance (Adjusted R2) increased from 38.1% (TPB) to 56.5% (proposed framework), which justifies and supports the addition of these new constructs in TPB while predicting the consumer's intention to purchase organic food in case of a developing nation. Once thought to be exclusive products, organic food products are now beginning commodity which can be easily found and local supermarkets easily Hjelmars (2011). Although it has not mainly reached unorganized retail, organized retail has started to have a separate section for organic food products. But non-availability of product experts at the site somewhere let's not start the propagation of products from the consideration set to decision set. Most of the prospects categorized as conscious and informed buyers have their concerns about quality conformance and certification sanctity. Since the segment that can become the first movers and brand ambassadors of organic food consumption need to be convinced about the conformity of quality elements. Research suggest that people judge a product as expensive and as 'not' value-for-the-money when the value offered by the differential prices is perceived to be less than the change in prices. Therefore, it is extremely important to persuade prospects to evaluate the premium prices in light of the nutritious value offered and the long-term health and emotional benefits associated with it.

## 5 Conclusion

The present study has proven the pertinence of the theory of planned behaviour for measuring consumer intention. The study supported the factors incorporated into the conceptual model.

In contrast, subjective norms and perceived behavioral control are the most significant factors, while attitude with intention and environmental knowledge also proved its applicability. The study has contributed to the growing body of research in organic food consumption with particular reference to a developing nation like India by incorporating additional constructs such as Environmental Knowledge in the TPB model. The findings supported the incorporation of Environmental Knowledge in the TPB model as both constructs significantly influenced the consumer's intention to purchase organic food. Further, it was also reported that the inclusion of the constructs had improved the predictive power of the proposed theoretical framework. The environment knowledge was found to be more important for Indian consumers than the others while making purchase decisions for organic foods.

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