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Stimulus of Consumer Perception on Buying Intention for Organic Food Products: Mediating Effect of Price Sensitivity

[1]Mrs. R. Sheela Jerusha, **[2]Dr. D. Elangovan**

[1]Research Scholar Department of Commerce, Government ArtsCollege (Grade-I) (Affiliated to Bharathidasan University, Tiruchirappalli - 620 024.), Ariyalur – 621 713, Tamil Nadu, India.

[2]Research Advisor & Assistant Professor Department of Commerce, Government Arts College (Grade-I) (Affiliated to Bharathidasan University, Tiruchirappalli - 620 024.), Ariyalur – 621 713, Tamil Nadu, India.

Abstract:

The study explores to test the dynamics of buying intention regarding organic food products within the Trichy district. Focused on recognizing the relationship between consumer perceptions, buying intentions, and the mediating role of price sensitivity. The study encompasses a sample of 485 consumers it is identified using purposive sampling. The methodological approach involves a cause-and-effect research design. A structured questionnaire is employed to collect data, and diverse statistical analyses such as simple percentage, Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), ANOVA, and Post-Hoc tests are utilized for comprehensive data interpretation. Findings indicated that cause-and-effect associations between variables such as health awareness, trust and credibility, quality and efficacy, consumer perception, price sensitivity and buying intention are established. Notably, price sensitivity emerges as a key mediator between consumer perception and buying intention, shedding light on the dynamics of consumer behavior in the organic food market. The findings assist to recognize the factors influencing consumer behavior and provide valuable insights for marketers, producers, and policymakers in catering to consumer demands within the organic food market.

Keywords: Organic Food Products, Consumer Perception, Price Sensitivity, Buying Intention, Health Awareness.

1. Introduction and Background

Consumer perception plays a pivotal role in shaping the modern marketplace, particularly in the realm of organic food products. The increasing emphasis on health, environmental concerns, and ethical consumption has significantly altered consumer behavior. It is vital to check how consumer perceptions influence buying intentions for organic food products has become a focal point for marketers and researchers alike. The term organic has transcended being merely a food category to embody a lifestyle choice (Curvelo et al., 2019). The perception of organic food goes beyond its nutritional value; it encompasses the ideologies of sustainability, naturalness, and ethical production. Consequently, consumer perception is multifaceted, influenced by a myriad of factors. Health consciousness stands as a dominant force driving consumer interest in organic food. The perception of these products as healthier, free from synthetic chemicals, and potentially more nutritious cultivates a distinct interest among consumers seeking a healthier lifestyle.

Moreover, the ethical and environmental aspects contribute significantly to consumer perception. The increased awareness of the ecological footprint of food production has pushed organic products into the spotlight. Consumers view these items as a sustainable choice, supporting environmentally friendly practices and animal welfare, thus aligning with their values. Social and cultural influences also play a substantial role in shaping consumer perceptions of organic food products. Peer recommendations, societal trends, and cultural beliefs all intertwine to create a complex web of consumer preferences. For instance, the rise of influencer culture and the prevalence of social media has magnified the impact of social influences on consumer choices. The portrayal of organic products in these spheres can significantly sway perceptions and subsequently influence buying intentions (Singh and Verma, 2017).

However, the link between consumer perception and buying intention isn't unidirectional. Factors such as price sensitivity act as a mediating variable. While consumers might hold positive perceptions of organic foods, their

purchase intentions can be tempered by the price factor. The notion that organic products come with a premium price tag can influence the buying decision, especially among price-sensitive consumers (Apaolaza et al., 2018). Learning about consumer perception regarding organic food products is not only valuable for marketers but also for policymakers and producers. It aids in developing effective marketing strategies, enhancing product positioning, and aligning production practices with consumer expectations. For policymakers, realizing these perceptions can assist in creating frameworks that support sustainable and ethical food production. Therefore, such investigation becomes increasingly crucial as the dynamics of consumer behavior continue to evolve in response to the changing paradigms of health, sustainability, and ethical consumption.

Consumer Perception: Realization of the factors that influence consumer perception of organic food products involves a diverse interplay of influences and sources. Among these, information sources stand out as a crucial inspiration for shaping consumer perceptions. Information dissemination through various channels such as online reviews, expert opinions, and scientific studies significantly impacts how consumers perceive organic food products. The availability of comprehensive and credible information regarding the benefits of organic food contributes to shaping positive consumer attitudes. Culturally rooted beliefs often play a substantial role in how consumers perceive the benefits of organic food products (Ditlevsen et al., 2019). In certain societies or communities, there may be a strong tradition or value system that supports the consumption of organic produce. Cultural narratives that extol the naturalness, healthfulness, and ecological benefits of organic foods reinforce positive perceptions among consumers, driving their inclination toward these products. These cultural beliefs and values create a collective perception that organic products are inherently better for health and the environment, influencing consumer choices (Wijaya and Sukidjo, 2017).

Actual experiences and interactions with organic products shape individual perceptions. Factors such as taste, freshness, appearance, and the overall quality of organic items play a crucial role in determining consumer satisfaction. Positive personal experiences with the quality and quantity of organic foods reinforce favorable perceptions, contributing to the likelihood of repeated purchases and continued positive attitudes. Consumers rely on certifications and trustworthy labeling to identify genuine organic products. A clear and credible labeling system that indicates adherence to organic standards and ethical production practices builds consumer trust. Trust in the authenticity of these labels significantly shapes consumer perceptions, reinforcing the positive image of organic products. The growing awareness of the environmental impact of conventional agricultural practices has pushed organic products into the spotlight (Nuttavuthisit and Thogersen, 2017). Consumers view these items as a sustainable choice, supporting environmentally friendly practices and animal welfare. This concern for sustainability aligns with the values of an increasing segment of consumers, influencing their perception of organic foods as a responsible and ethical choice.

Health Awareness: Health awareness surrounding organic food products is driven by superior nutritional value, viewing them as beneficial for personal health. The absence of synthetic chemicals and the potential for higher nutritional content in organic produce reinforces the belief that these items offer healthier alternatives. The inclination towards wellness and health trends prevalent in society significantly impacts health awareness regarding organic food products. Consumers, influenced by societal wellness narratives, are drawn to organic foods, considering them as a part of a healthier lifestyle. Wellness trends in media, advocating for clean eating and organic diets, contribute to the heightened health awareness surrounding organic products. The awareness of the potential health risks associated with synthetic chemicals and additives in conventional food products pushes individuals towards organic alternatives (Ahmed et al., 2021). This concern for reducing chemical exposure fosters the belief that organic foods are a safer and healthier choice, thus amplifying health awareness and driving consumer interest in these products.

Trust and Credibility: Certification familiarity and reputation play a significant role in establishing trust. Consumers familiar with various organic certifications and labels, recognizing their reliability, are more inclined to trust the authenticity of organic products. Established certifications build credibility, assuring consumers of adherence to stringent standards and ethical practices. Word-of-mouth and social proof also contribute significantly to trust in organic products. Positive experiences shared by peers or through social networks wield substantial influence, creating a sense of reliability. Recommendations from friends, family, or social circles

serve as strong indicators of trust, reinforcing the credibility of organic items in the eyes of consumers (Shahril et al., 2022). Products with transparent supply chains and production processes build trust, offering a sense of assurance regarding the product's origins and methods. Consumers value the transparency and traceability of organic items, as it aligns with their desire for ethical and responsible consumption, further solidifying their trust in these products.

Quality and Efficacy: Consumers often attribute superior taste, aroma, and texture to organic products, elevating their sensory experiences and contributing to a positive perception of quality. The organic items' ability to provide an enhanced sensory experience reinforces the belief in their quality. Consumers tend to associate longer shelf life, freshness, and a visually appealing appearance with better quality in organic foods. The perceived durability and appearance contribute to the overall positive perception of organic product quality. Scientific evidence supporting the quality of organic food products reinforces consumer perceptions (Ariffin et al., 2019). Scientific studies or evidence highlighting the nutritional benefits or superior quality of organic produce further solidify consumer beliefs in the efficacy and overall quality of these items. The existence of scientific evidence acts as a credibility booster, reinforcing the perception that organic products offer higher quality and efficacy compared to their conventional counterparts.

Price Sensitivity: Price sensitivity affects the consumer behavior towards organic food products. Personal affordability to buy organic food products stands as a primary factor impacting the mediating role of price sensitivity. For many consumers, the perception of organic items as premium or higher-priced products creates a barrier, especially for those with limited budgets. The affordability factor significantly influences the decision-making process, as consumers weigh the perceived benefits of organic foods against their financial capabilities, directly affecting their purchase intentions (Pandey et al., 2019). The lack of differentiation between organic products further magnifies the role of price sensitivity in consumer behavior. Consumers perceive minimal differences between organic and non-organic alternatives in terms of taste, appearance, or perceived benefits, price becomes a primary determinant. If the perceived benefits of organic products are not significantly different from conventional options, consumers are more likely to base their purchasing decisions primarily on price, amplifying the impact of price sensitivity in their choices (Yangzom and Singh, 2019).

Consumers evaluate whether the price aligns with the perceived quality of organic products. If the perceived quality doesn't justify the price, it heightens price sensitivity, potentially leading to a negative impact on purchase intentions. Consumers weigh the perceived quality against the cost, and if the perceived value does not align with the price, it can deter purchase behavior. Consumers often conduct comparative evaluations with similar organic products or non-organic alternatives. If the price of a particular organic product significantly exceeds that of comparable items, it magnifies price sensitivity, potentially influencing the decision-making process. The comparative pricing directly influences consumer perceptions of value, thus shaping their purchasing decisions. Sales and promotional offers significantly impact consumer behavior, especially for price-sensitive individuals. Discounts and offers often alter perceived value, influencing purchase decisions (Wong and Aini, 2017). Consumers tend to be more inclined to purchase organic products during promotional periods or when they perceive an enhanced value proposition, highlighting the crucial role of price sensitivity in their choices.

Buying Intention: Buying intention concerning organic food products is influenced by a multitude of factors that stem from perceived health benefits to personal values and societal trends. Perceived health benefits serve as a dominant factor shaping buying intentions for organic food items. Consumers often perceive organic products as healthier options due to their absence of synthetic chemicals and potentially superior nutritional content. The belief in the health advantages of organic foods significantly influences buying intentions, driving consumers towards these products in the pursuit of a healthier lifestyle (Yadav and Pathak, 2016). Recommendations from friends, family, or influencers, along with societal trends promoting health and sustainability, influence consumer choices. Positive word-of-mouth or societal influences can significantly impact buying intentions, nudging individuals towards organic purchases. The social influence on consumer decisions underscores the importance of peer opinions and societal trends in shaping buying intentions for organic food products.

Consumers assess the perceived value and benefits of organic products concerning their cost. They weigh the advantages of organic items against their perceived benefits, questioning whether the cost justifies the expected value. If consumers perceive organic products to offer tangible benefits that justify their cost, it enhances their buying intentions (Sharma and Bhatia, 2019). The ease of access to organic items and their availability play a crucial role in influencing purchasing decisions. If organic products are readily available and convenient to purchase, consumers are more likely to translate their positive perceptions into buying actions. Accessibility and convenience serve as facilitators in converting favorable attitudes towards organic products into actual purchase intentions. Individuals who value ethical consumption, sustainability, or support local produce are more likely to align their purchasing behavior with these values. Personal values act as a driving force behind buying intentions, as consumers aim to reflect their values through their purchase decisions (Li et al., 2021).

2. Statement of the Problem

The relationship between consumer perception and buying intention in the realm of organic food products is confounded by the mediating role of price sensitivity. While consumers exhibit positive attitudes and perceptions towards organic products, the transition of these favorable perceptions into actual buying intentions is impeded by the intricate influence of price sensitivity. The discrepancy between consumer perceptions and purchase intentions, mediated by price sensitivity, presents a critical conundrum in the consumer decision-making process. Knowing such dynamic relationship is crucial in comprehending the complexities of consumer behavior in the organic food market. Consumers frequently hold favorable perceptions of organic products, acknowledging their health benefits, environmental friendliness, and ethical production methods. However, the decision to purchase these products is significantly impacted by the perception of price. The higher cost associated with organic items often deters consumers, leading to a conflict between their positive perceptions and actual purchase intentions. The discrepancy creates a gap that demands exploration. Estimating the mediating role of price sensitivity between consumer perceptions and buying intentions is essential in realizing the barriers and facilitators that drive consumer behavior in the organic food market.

3. Need of the study

The need for the study arises from the evident gap between consumer perceptions and their subsequent buying intentions for organic food products. With the intensifying attention in health, sustainability, and ethical consumption, it's crucial to explore deeper into the factors inhibiting or fostering the translation of positive perceptions into purchase behavior. Realizing the mediating role of price sensitivity is vital, as it stands as a significant impediment in this transition. The study is essential for marketers, producers, and policymakers to devise effective strategies that bridge the gap between positive consumer perceptions and actual buying intentions. Marketers need insights into how to position organic products in a way that aligns with consumer perceptions while considering price sensitivity. Producers could benefit from understanding how pricing strategies impact consumer behavior. Policymakers require this knowledge to create frameworks that support the sustainable production and consumption of organic products. In this way, the study is imperative to assess the complexities influencing consumer behavior and aid in the development of well-versed strategies that align with market demands.

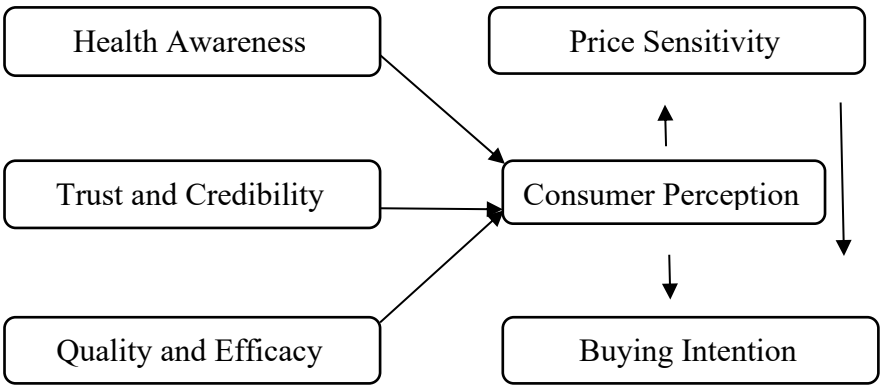
4. Literature Review and Hypotheses Development

Consumer perception of organic food products is a complex and multifaceted domain, influenced by various factors. Consumers associate organic products with health benefits, perceiving them as healthier due to the absence of synthetic chemicals and potential nutritional advantages (Uslu and Huseynli, 2018). The perception drives interest and positive attitudes towards organic items. In addition to health considerations, environmental consciousness significantly shapes consumer perceptions (Kaur, 2023). The desire to support sustainable agricultural practices and reduce the environmental impact of food production drives consumers towards organic choices (Devi et al., 2023). Social and cultural influences also play a substantial role, as peer recommendations, societal trends, and cultural values influence perceptions, driving interest in organic products (Sulaiman et al., 2020). Social influences, such as peer recommendations and societal trends, contribute to positive consumer perceptions, driving interest in organic items (Shobha et al., 2023).

Health consciousness remains a primary driver, with consumers perceiving organic products as healthier due to the absence of synthetic chemicals and potential nutritional superiority (Prentice et al., 2019). Environmental consciousness also significantly shapes perceptions, as consumers view organic products as sustainable choices, supporting ethical production practices (Mahato and Kadel, 2015). The transition from positive consumer perceptions to actual buying intentions remains a complex puzzle. Consumers hold positive attitudes towards organic products, various factors hinder the translation of these attitudes into buying behavior (Bharathi et al., 2014). Price sensitivity stands out as a key factor influencing buying intentions. The discrepancy between perceived benefits and the higher price of organic products often deters consumers from actual purchases (Cakici and Tekeli, 2021). Price sensitivity emerges as a crucial factor impacting buying intentions, with affordability, lack of differentiation between organic and non-organic products, and the perceived value for money playing pivotal roles (Shrestha, 2020). Personal affordability significantly impacts the decision-making process, influencing consumers' ability to purchase organic products (Pacho, 2020). Lack of differentiation between organic and non-organic products, especially in sensory experiences, amplifies price sensitivity. The discrepancy between perceived benefits and the higher price of organic products poses a significant barrier (Wee et al., 2014).

The buying intention for organic food products is influenced by various psychological and environmental factors. Perceptions of health benefits significantly drive the inclination towards purchasing organic items (Pham et al., 2019). The belief in the health advantages, absence of harmful chemicals, and potential nutritional superiority instill a desire for a healthier lifestyle, directly influencing the intention to purchase organic food products (Krishnakumare and Niranjan, 2017). Positive experiences shared through word-of-mouth or societal trends promoting health and ethical consumption reinforce the desirability of organic products. Recommendations from peers significantly influence consumers, prompting them to act on their buying intentions (Ragavan and Mageh, 2013). Value for money and the perceived benefit of organic items are also key determinants influencing buying intentions. Consumers evaluate the perceived value of organic products in relation to their cost (Ghali-Zinoubi and Toukabri, 2019). If consumers believe that organic items offer substantial benefits that justify their cost, it enhances their buying intentions. However, if the perceived benefits do not align with the cost, it may hinder their purchasing behavior (Paul and Rana, 2012). Convenience and accessibility further amplify buying intentions for organic food products. The ease of access to these items and their availability significantly influences consumer behavior. Accessibility and convenience act as facilitators in converting positive attitudes towards organic products into tangible buying actions (Ding et al., 2021). Literature review helps to develop the model proposed in figure 1.

Figure 1: Conceptual Model



On the basis of literature review and conceptual model, the subsequent hypotheses are proposed.

$H_{1.1}$: Precursors have significant effect on health awareness, trust and credibility, quality and efficacy, consumer perception, price sensitivity and buying intention.

$H_{1.2}$: Health awareness, trust and credibility, and quality and efficacy have significant effect on consumer perception.

$H_{1.3}$: Consumer perception has significant effect on buying intention.

$H_{1.4}$: Price sensitivity has mediating effect between consumer perception and buying intention.

$H_{1.5}$: Demographic profile has significant effect on health awareness, trust and credibility, quality and efficacy, consumer perception, price sensitivity and buying intention.

5. Materials and Methods

The methodological approach aims a thorough investigation into the interplay of consumer perception, buying intentions, and the mediating effect of price sensitivity in the context of organic food products. Purposive sampling is utilized to select sample from the vast population of organic food consumers. Adhering to Cochran's formula, the minimum sample size required is 384; however, the study exceeds this benchmark, enhancing the robustness and reliability of the findings. The study takes sample size of 485 consumers purchasing organic food products within the Trichy district. The study utilizes cause-and-effect research design, aiming to establish relationships between consumer perceptions, buying intentions, and the mediating role of price sensitivity. A structured questionnaire is meticulously prepared and employed as the primary tool for data collection. Simple percentage analysis used to assess demography of consumers. Structural equation modeling is utilized to explore complex relationships between variables, offering a deeper realization of causal connections. Additionally, ANOVA and Post-Hoc tests are employed to discern significant differences among demographic segments and research constructs. Prior to the main survey, a pilot survey is conducted to validate the questionnaire's effectiveness and refine the research design, ensuring clarity and relevance in data collection and analysis.

6. Results and Discussion

6.1. Analysis of Demography

The demography of consumers using organic food products are depicted in Table 1.

Table 1: Demography Analysis

Demography	Distribution	Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	272	56.08
	Female	213	43.92
Age	Below 25 years	202	41.65
	25 – 40 years	227	46.80
	Above 40 years	56	11.55
Academic Status	Up to HSC	247	50.93
	UG	106	21.86
	PG	132	27.22
Monthly Income	Less than Rs.25,000	380	78.35
	Rs.25,000 – 50,000	65	13.40
	More than Rs.50,000	40	8.25

Source of Income	Business	144	29.69
	Employed	153	31.55
	Retired/Agriculture	188	38.76

Table 1 reveals that 56.08% of the consumers are male and 43.92% are female. Age distribution shows that 41.65% are under 25 years old, 46.80% are between 25 and 40 years old, and 11.55% are over 40 years old. Regarding academic status, 50.93% have an education level up to HSC, 21.86% hold an undergraduate degree, and 27.22% have completed postgraduate studies. In terms of monthly income, a significant majority of 78.35% earn less than Rs.25,000, while 13.40% earn between Rs.25,000 and Rs.50,000, and 8.25% earn more than Rs.50,000. Lastly, the sources of income show that 29.69% involved in business, 31.55% employed, and 38.76% engaged in either retirement or agriculture.

6.2. Cause-and-Effect Relationship among Research Variables

The study intended to assess the cause and effect association of research variables like Health Awareness (HAWS), Trust and Credibility (TCBT), Quality and Efficacy (QTEF), Consumer Perception (CSPR), Price Sensitivity (PSVT), and Buying Intention (BINT) towards organic food products. In this way, the observed, endogenous variables include HAWS1 – HAWS3, TCBT1 – TCBT3, QTEF1 – QTEF3, CSPR1 – CSPR5, PSVT1 – PSVT5, and BINT1 – BINT5. The unobserved, endogenous variables include CSPR, PSVT and BINT. The unobserved, exogenous variables include e1 – e27, HAWS, TCBT and QTEF. Therefore, the model is executed with 57 variables, it consists of 24 observed variables, 33 unobserved variables, 27 endogenous variables and 30 exogenous variables. The structural equation model is presented in Figure 1, and the corresponding path analysis are furnished in Table 2.

Figure 2: Structural Equation Model

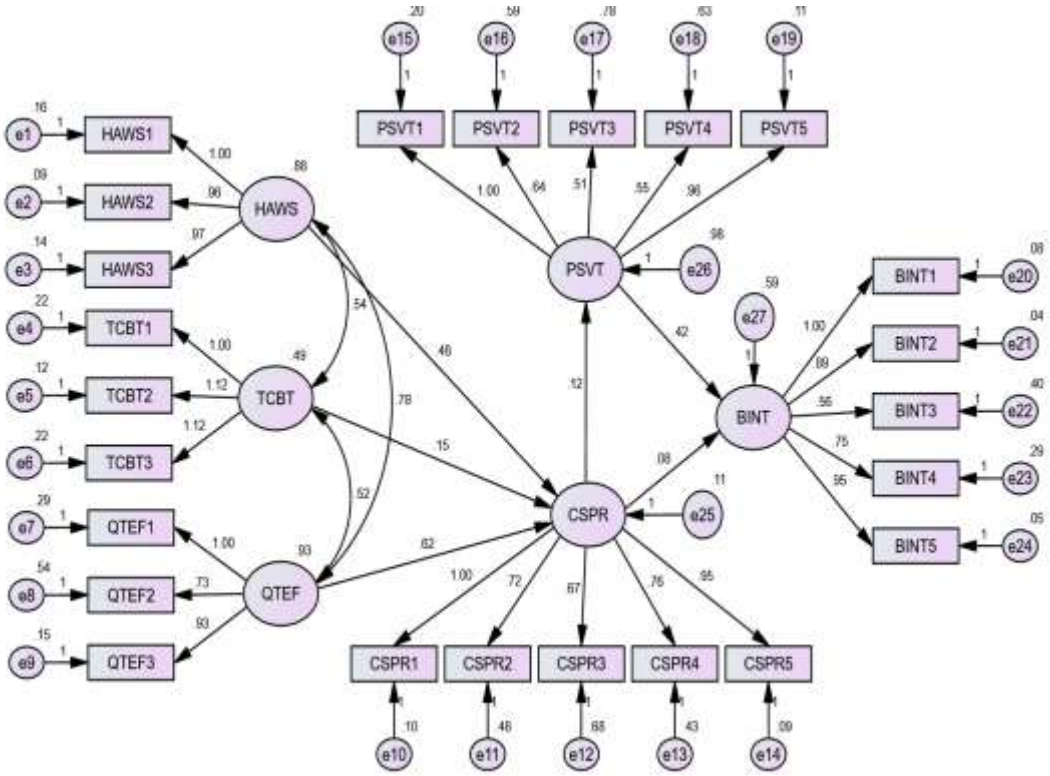


Table 2: Path Analysis

Path			Unstd. Estimate	Std. Estimate	t	p
HAWS3 - Concern for chemical-free food exposure	<---	HAWS	.967	.925	36.212	***
HAWS2 - Inclination towards wellness and health trends in society	<---		.958	.950	39.532	***
HAWS1 - Nutritional value for personal health	<---		1.000	.922		
TCBT3 - Transparency and traceability of product	<---	TCBT	1.117	.860	22.998	***
TCBT2 - Word-of-mouth and social proof	<---		1.117	.913	24.966	***
TCBT1 - Certification familiarity and reputation	<---		1.000	.830		
QTEF3 - Scientific evidence supporting the quality	<---	QTEF	.927	.916	28.764	***
QTEF2 - Longer shelf life, better freshness, and appearance	<---		.732	.694	17.877	***
QTEF1 - Sensory experiences on taste, aroma and texture	<---		1.000	.872		
CSPR5 - Concern for environmental impact and sustainability	<---	CSPR	.947	.966	54.653	***
CSPR4 - Trust in organic labels and certifications	<---		.758	.797	26.818	***
CSPR3 - Personal satisfaction on quality and quantity	<---		.673	.682	19.598	***
CSPR2 - Cultural beliefs and values on benefit	<---		.723	.767	24.606	***
CSPR1 - Inspiration of information sources	<---		1.000	.964		
PSVT1 - Personal affordability to buy	<---	PSVT	1.000	.914		
PSVT2 - Lack of differentiation of organic products	<---		.636	.638	16.380	***
PSVT3 - Proportion of price and product quality	<---		.510	.500	11.859	***
PSVT4 - Comparison with prices of similar products	<---		.547	.568	13.939	***
PSVT5 - Reaction to sales, discounts and promotional offers	<---		.955	.944	31.391	***
BINT1 - Perceived health benefits	<---	BINT	1.000	.955		
BINT2 - Peer recommendations and societal trends	<---		.888	.967	52.531	***
BINT3 - Value for money and perceived benefit	<---		.563	.621	16.724	***
BINT4 - Convenience and accessibility of organic products	<---		.753	.779	25.154	***
BINT5 - Personal values on organic products	<---		.948	.967	52.432	***
CSPR	<---	HAWS	.479	.392	7.881	***
CSPR	<---	TCBT	.150	.092	2.462	.014

CSPR	<---	QTEF	.621	.523	10.984	***
PSVT	<---	CSPR	.124	.142	3.008	.003
BINT	<---	CSPR	.080	.104	2.504	.012
BINT	<---	PSVT	.422	.475	10.900	***

*** Significant at 1%

It is essential to compute the fit indices after implementing the structural equation model to evaluate how well the model fits the data. The results indicate a strong alignment between the model and the data. The CMIN/df value is 4.053, which falls within the acceptable range of 3 to 5, suggesting a good fit. Similarly, the RMSEA value is 0.054, below the threshold of 0.06. Additionally, baseline comparison indices (RFI = 0.908, NFI = 0.919, CFI = 0.938, IFI = 0.938, and TLI = 0.929) and goodness of fit indices (GFI = 0.917 and AGFI = 0.924) all exceed 0.9. These values collectively indicate that the model fits the data well.

Table 2 furnishes that all paths are statistically significant at 1% level. The p-values validates that ($H_{1.1}$) precursors have significant effect on health awareness, trust and credibility, quality and efficacy, consumer perception, price sensitivity and buying intention. One-unit increase in concern for chemical-free food exposure, inclination towards wellness and health trends in society, and nutritional value for personal health will enhance health awareness by 0.967-unit, 0.958-unit, and 1 unit respectively. The inclination towards wellness and health trends in society has high impact, while nutritional value for personal health has a relatively smaller influence on health awareness. Similarly, a one-unit increase in transparency and traceability of the product, word-of-mouth and social proof, and certification familiarity and reputation will increase trust and credibility by 1.117-unit, 1.117-unit, and 1-unit respectively. Word-of-mouth and social proof have a stronger impact on trust and credibility compared to certification familiarity and reputation. Regarding quality and efficacy, a one-unit rise in scientific evidence supporting quality, longer shelf life and better freshness, and sensory experiences on taste, aroma, and texture will lead to improvements by 0.927-unit, 0.732-unit, and 1-unit respectively. Scientific evidence supporting quality has the highest effect on quality and efficacy.

In terms of consumer perception, a one-unit increase in concern for environmental impact and sustainability, trust in organic labels and certifications, personal satisfaction on quality and quantity, cultural beliefs and values on benefit, and inspiration from information sources will improve consumer perception by 0.947-unit, 0.758-unit, 0.673-unit, 0.723-unit, and 1-unit respectively. Concern for environmental impact and sustainability has the most significant influence on consumer perception. Price sensitivity is affected by a one-unit increase in personal affordability to buy, lack of differentiation of organic products, proportion of price and product quality, comparison with prices of similar products, and reaction to sales, discounts, and promotional offers, which will change price sensitivity by 1-unit, 0.636-unit, 0.510-unit, 0.547-unit, and 0.955-unit respectively. Reaction to sales, discounts, and promotional offers has the greatest impact on price sensitivity. One-unit increase in perceived health benefits, peer recommendations and societal trends, value for money and perceived benefit, convenience and accessibility of organic products, and personal values on organic products will boost buying intention by 1-unit, 0.888-unit, 0.563-unit, 0.753-unit, and 0.948-unit respectively. Peer recommendations and societal trends have the most substantial effect on buying intention.

The ascertained p-values are significant and the $H_{1.2}$ is validated. Therefore, health awareness, trust and credibility, and quality and efficacy have significant effect on consumer perception. Coefficient values prove that one-unit rise in health awareness, trust and credibility, and quality and efficacy will increase in consumer perception by 0.479-unit, 0.150-unit, and 0.621-unit respectively. Quality and efficacy have the most significant impact on consumer perception, while trust and credibility have a comparatively smaller effect. Similar to that p-value is significant at 5% level and the $H_{1.3}$ is validated. Therefore, consumer perception has significant effect on buying intention. Single-unit rise in consumer perception will enhance buying intention by 0.080-unit. Results furnishes that health awareness, trust and credibility, and quality and efficacy significantly affect consumer perception, which in turn significantly impacts buying intention.

6.3. Mediating Effect of PSVT between CSPR and BINT

The mediating effect of price sensitivity between perception of consumers and their intention to buy organic food products is examined. The hypothesis states that ($H_{1.4}$) price sensitivity has mediating effect between consumer perception and buying intention.

Table 3: PSVT between CSPR and BINT

Impact	Path			Estimate	p
Mediating Path A	PSVT	<---	CSPR	.124	.003
Direct Path	BINT	<---	CSPR	.080	.012
Mediating Path B	BINT	<---	PSVT	.422	***

*** Significant at 1%

Table 3 shows that price sensitivity significant influences buying intention towards organic food products, with a coefficient of 0.080 revealing a positive effect. The mediation shows that consumer perception influences price sensitivity to the extent of 0.124, and price sensitivity influences buying intention to the extent of 0.422. The observed mediation value is 0.052328, which has an overall effect of 0.132328. The computed variance value is 0.3954, which exceeds 0.2, and confirms strong partial mediation effect. Therefore, price sensitivity has partial mediating effect between consumer perception and buying intention.

6.4. Demographic Effect on Research Variables

The effect of demography on research variables are examined by One-Way ANOVA. The hypothesis reveals that ($H_{1.5}$) demographic profile has significant effect on health awareness, trust and credibility, quality and efficacy, consumer perception, price sensitivity and buying intention.

Table 4: One-Way ANOVA

Variables	Gender		Age		Academic Status		Monthly Income		Source of Income	
	t	Sig.	F	Sig.	F	Sig.	F	Sig.	F	Sig.
HAWS	.541	.589	6.062	.003***	9.623	.000***	7.508	.001***	11.999	.000***
TCBT	.262	.794	3.428	.033**	5.336	.005***	4.430	.012**	3.563	.029**
QTEF	.123	.902	3.833	.022**	5.059	.007***	5.104	.006***	8.616	.000***
CSPR	.246	.806	3.124	.045**	7.309	.001***	8.495	.000***	12.239	.000***
PSVT	1.462	.144	11.927	.000***	10.392	.000***	19.002	.000***	7.556	.001***
BINT	.385	.701	3.413	.034**	5.843	.003***	5.941	.003***	8.397	.000***

*** Significant at 1% ** Significant at 5%

Table 4 reveals that gender has no significant effect on research variables. On the other hand, age, academic status, monthly income and source of incomes has significant effect on research variables such as health awareness, trust and credibility, quality and efficacy, consumer perception, price sensitivity and buying intention. The significant results are adhered for post-hoc test. For age, Duncan post-hoc test formed three

identical subsets, below 25 years in subset a; 25 – 40 years in subset a,b; and above 40 years in subset b for health awareness, trust and credibility, quality and efficacy, consumer perception. It also formed two identical subsets, below 25 years and 25 – 40 years in subset a; and above 40 years in subset b for price sensitivity and buying intention. For academic status, Gabrieal post-hoc test formed two identical subsets, up to HSC in subset a; and UG and PG in subset b for health awareness and price sensitivity. It also formed three identical subsets, up to HSC subset a; and UG in subset a,b; and PG in subset b for trust and credibility, quality and efficacy, consumer perception, and buying intention. For monthly income, Ryan-Einot-Gabriel-Welsch Range post-hoc test formed three identical subsets, less than Rs.25,000 in subset a; Rs.25,000 – 50,000 in subset a,b; and more than Rs.50,000 in subset b for health awareness, trust and credibility, quality and efficacy, consumer perception. It also formed three identical subsets, less than Rs.25,000 in subset a; and Rs.25,000 – 50,000 in subset b; and more than Rs.50,000 in subset c for price sensitivity. It also formed two identical subsets, less than Rs.25,000 and Rs.25,000 – 50,000 in subset a; and more than Rs.50,000 in subset b for buying intention. For source of income, Scheffe's post-hoc test formed two identical subsets, business in subset a; and retired/agriculture and employed in subset b for health awareness, quality and efficacy, consumer perception, price sensitivity, and buying intention. It also formed three identical subsets, business subset a; and employed in subset a,b; and retired/agricutlure in subset b for trust and credibility.

7. Conclusion

The demographic analysis of consumers of organic food products reveals fascinating insights into their characteristics. A substantial majority of consumers are male, with a significant portion falling within the age range of 25 to 40 years. Moreover, a notable proportion holds educational qualifications up to the HSC level, while a significant majority earns below a certain income threshold. Interestingly, the primary sources of income for consumers are diverse, with a considerable portion engaged in employment and business activities. The study emphasizes the critical role of various factors in shaping consumer attitudes and behaviors towards organic food products. Notably, factors such as concern for health, inclination towards wellness trends, and awareness of nutritional values significantly influence consumers' perceptions and intentions to purchase organic products. Moreover, trust in product quality, environmental sustainability, and personal values emerge as key drivers of consumer perception and buying intention. Furthermore, the analysis reveals significant mediation effects, particularly concerning price sensitivity. Price sensitivity mediates the relationship between consumer perception and buying intention, indicating that consumers' perceptions of organic products significantly influence their sensitivity to pricing, which, in turn, impacts their purchasing decisions.

Gender insignificantly impacts variables, while age, academic status, monthly income, and sources of income significantly affect health awareness, trust and credibility, quality and efficacy, consumer perception, price sensitivity and buying intention. Post-hoc analyses reveal distinct age groups with varied impacts across variables. Academic status shows differing effects on variables based on educational attainment. Monthly income stratifies into distinct groups, particularly affecting price sensitivity and buying intention. Sources of income exhibit significant differences in their impact on variables, particularly trust and credibility. These results emphasize the importance of demographic factors in shaping consumer attitudes and behaviors towards organic food products. These findings highlight the complex interaction towards purchase intentions in the context of organic food consumption. They offer valuable insights for marketers and policymakers aiming to better understand and cater to the needs and preferences of consumers in the organic food market.

8. Research Implications

The research findings carry significant implications for various stakeholders within the organic food market. For marketers, a deeper understanding of the relationship between consumer perceptions, buying intentions, and the influence of price sensitivity offers strategic insights. Such information can guide effective marketing campaigns, product positioning, and pricing strategies tailored to consumer preferences. Producers can leverage these insights to align production practices, emphasizing transparency and quality to meet consumer expectations. Policymakers benefit by comprehending consumer attitudes, aiding in the formulation of regulations that support ethical and sustainable practices within the organic food industry. Additionally, the research provides a basis for further investigations, encouraging future studies to explore various aspects of

consumer behavior, demographic influences, and the efficacy of marketing interventions within the organic food market.

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