Tourist buying intentions towards local food: Analysing the moderating impact of food neophobia

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ABSTRACT

In recent years, tourism has grown with a focus on traditional and nutritive local food, enabling local farmers and service operators to create regional identities. However, according to researchers, tourists are curious about local food and drinks but somehow hesitate to try them. The current research is the first attempt to comprehensively analyse tourist buying behaviour towards local food of Uttarakhand in India, which is known for its organic and therapeutic staple food.

This paper statistically aims to analyse tourists’ intentions to buy local food by investigating the moderating effect of food neophobia (FN) on the theory of planned behaviour (TPB). A survey of 266 tourists was used to collect...
data. The findings reveal that subjective norm (SN), attitude (ATT), and perceived behaviour control (PBC) have a positive and significant influence on tourists' buying intention for local food, where both subjective norm and attitude are moderated by food neophobia on their relationship with buying intentions. Furthermore, the study provides valuable information on consumer food choices, so entrepreneurs and decision-makers can accurately assess the likelihood of tourists purchasing local products.

KEYWORDS

Food neophobia, Local food, Tourist, Buying intention, theory of planned behaviour, India, Food tourism

1. INTRODUCTION

As per Hassan (2008), a destination’s food is regarded as a constituent feature that exhibits its intangible history. Generally, the traditional and high-quality agricultural foods grown in a region provide a significant economic opportunity (Fernández and Mogollón 2019). Therefore, consuming quality local foods can significantly contribute to the socio-economic prosperity of the region where they are produced (Gupta, Khanna and Gupta, 2020). As if there is no specific definition for local food, Eriksen (2013) defines it as "system in which grown food is consumed near its origin".

Developed countries like USA, United Kingdom, Italy, and Germany have conducted numerous studies researching the local food consumer behaviour in the past (Gbadamosi, 2019). Most of these countries have already established themselves as food tourism destinations. However, the Indian cuisine is also ranked among the top 10 cuisines in the world (YouGov | Italian Food Is the World’s most Popular, Indian Cuisine Ranks Ninth, 2019) Contrary, Indian destinations are still struggling because of two main reasons. First, there is a lack of quality literature on consumer behaviour towards Indian local food (Abraham and Kannan, 2015) and secondly, implementation of policies by destination managers without understanding the consumer needs have also not added much to the cause (Upadhyay and Sharma, 2014).
Therefore, this research attempts to identify the food choice behaviour of tourists in the Indian context; considering that most of the food is unknown to the global audience, a personality trait of Food neophobia is incorporated into the research process, which is an unwillingness to try new foods (Mak, Lumbers, and Chang, 2017), to have a more precise depiction of consumer behaviour. Above all, research on emerging markets is still limited because attitudes and behaviours are influenced mainly by social-cultural context and other regional scenarios (Kilders, Caputo and Liverpool-Tasie, 2020).

The selection of the research site bestows its significance; Uttarakhand is a Himalayan Indian state in India, and with the existence of innumerable Hindu pilgrimages, the region is popularly acknowledged as Devbhoomi (land of Gods). Consequently, religious tourism contributes substantially to the province’s tourism revenue (Painoli, 2019). Moreover, the local food of the terrain is intense in therapeutic properties since it grows at elevated altitudes with an extraordinary topography that globally attracts tourists for pilgrimage, spirituality, and cultural flavours (Ahlawat, Sharma and Gautam, 2019) which also includes the holy land of Rishikesh (yoga capital of the world). The staple grains of the province such as ragi, black soybeans, horse gram, and red rice of the terrain are not only rich in nutrition but also organic which provide a distinctive taste to the cuisine (Maikhuri, Rawat, Maletha, Phondani, Semwal, Bahuguna and Bisht, 2019).

Since intention invokes behaviour directly (Ajzen 1991) and to understand consumers’ consumption patterns, it is essential to know their behavioural intentions towards the commodity (Yarimoglu, Kazancoglu and Bulut, 2019). The current study employs theory of planned behaviour (TPB) (Ajzen, 1985). TPB is used extensively in the context of food choice to exemplify how subjective norm (SN), attitude (ATT), and perceived behaviour control (PBC) evolve differently (Nardi, Jardim, Ladeira and Santini, 2019). Parallelly, buying intention can never be accurate until and unless it is evaluated through personality traits, as it has a significant association with purchasing behaviour (Gangai and Agrawal, 2016). The trait of food neophobia has become widely recognised as a determining variable in the field of consumer food preferences.

Therefore, the study attempts to answer two key research questions:
a) How do determinants of TPB influence the local food buying intention in Uttarakhand?

b) How does food neophobia influence local food buying intention among tourists?

While TPB has successfully predicted behaviour in various domains, including food choice (Ortega, Berrios, Méndez, Soto and Schnettler, 2019), a conceptual plan premised on TPB was also developed to perceive the research’s objectives.

Furthermore, this research contributes to the literature on food tourism, destination branding and employment generation. Still, it also serves as a valuable academic resource for researchers and entrepreneurial students to frame policies accordingly for future business projects in other identical settings (Wu, Chang and Kishen, 2016). Incorporating the current study into the academic and managerial practices would also aid in encountering the migration of people from hills to plains, a significant problem not only in India but across the globe (Awasthi and Mehta, 2020).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The demand for local produce is influenced by various factors, such as economic stimulus, ecological concerns, health concerns, and social issues. This study aims to investigate the inherent behaviour that influences consumer inclinations to purchase local foods.

The consumption of food by tourists as a form of cultural expression usually has two opposing effects on tourism; firstly, an attraction for tourists because they can sample and enjoy local cuisine (Sthapit, 2018). Secondly, tourists’ dietary habits in their home country restrict their intake of local foods when visiting a particular destination (Birch and Memery, 2020). In the first scenario, the eating experience of a traveller differs significantly from that of their routine, whereas, in the second situation, it is simply a replication of their daily routine (Lin, Guia, Xu and Cui, 2020).
Although India is a land of diverse cultures with its curries, kebabs, spices, and flavours, there are also differences in the consumer approach. For instance, in places like Delhi, where the majority of tourists are food neohiliac eager to try new foods, dishes, or cuisines (Chatterjee and Suklabaidya, 2021), there are certain regions where local ingredients and cuisine struggle due to a lack of awareness and neophobic traits (Krishnakumar, 2019). In the challenging scenario of COVID-19, India's travel and tourism industry contributed US$ 121.9 billion to the GDP in 2020 (Indian Tourism and Hospitality Industry Analysis Presentation IBEF, 2021). Such statistics motivate states like Uttarakhand, which have organic food with therapeutic properties, to advertise themselves as sustainable tourism destinations (Maji & Meena, 2017).

2.1) THEORY OF PLANNED BEHAVIOUR (TPB)

Sociocultural psychology offers a variety of models; the most frequently recognised and utilised among all is the theory of planned behaviour (Wang and Scrimgeour, 2021). The basic reasoning behind the application of TPB is the universal approach of the model, which includes studies on food image (Hashemi, Mohammed, Kiumarsi, Kee, and Anarestani, 2021), food recognition (D'Souza, Brouwer, Singaraju and Veganism, 2022) and numerous studies related to food and tourism (Bakti and Nardi 2019; Khajehshahkoohi 2021). According to TPB, behavioural intention (a conscientious intent to respond) is the principal predictor of a particular behaviour. In the present research model, behavioural intention is labelled as local food buying intention, as the novelty aspect of local food has a triggering impact on tourist buying intention (Birch and Memery, 2020). Attitudes towards the behaviour also impact it (can be negative or positive assessments of performance), subjective norms (conceptions about social norms), and perceived behavioural control (the performance and controllability perceptions) (Wang, 2020); (Tandon, Dhir, Kaur, Kushwah and Salo, 2020); (Bruijn, Rhodes and Osch, 2012). Furthermore, buying intention is also mediated and moderated by food neophobia in various contexts (Siew, Rahman, Rahman, Haris and Mohd, 2016); (Kim, Jang and Kim, 2014).
Consequently, the TPB framework is considered the most suitable baseline model for the current research, which aims to evaluate tourists' buying intentions toward the local food of Uttarakhand.

2.2) ATTITUDE

Attitude is a persistent behavioural or physiological tendency resulting from experiences, exerting influence over how a person responds to groups and situations in which he finds himself (Allport, 1935); (Levitt, Meng, Zhang and Pietro, 2019). Lack of awareness or a negative attitude toward a commodity has often been a major factor affecting purchasing intent (Ferrari, Baum, Banterle and Steur, 2020). Attitudes provide vital feedback for making decisions and determining how someone acts. (e.g., those who are more likely to enjoy frozen desserts than those who believe them to be unhealthy") (Lozanski and Baumgartner, 2020).

Also, previous research indicates that in addition to food choices, attitude determines most human behaviour characteristics (Roy and Ballantine, 2020). In addition, the findings also reveal that most attributes of attitude significantly impact buying intention (Ueasangkomsate and Santiteerakul, 2016) As such, attitude is also one of the critical determinants influencing the consumer's buying intention regarding local food (Memon ,Mirza,Lim,Umrani,Hassan,Cham and Shahzad , 2019), while attitude is also a key determinant influencing tourist perception of the destination's food image (Freire and Gertner, 2020).

Consequently, based on the above review, the following hypothesis is proposed.

Hypothesis 1: Tourists’ attitude towards food significantly impacts their intention to buy local foods in Uttarakhand.

2.3) SUBJECTIVE NORM (SN)

Subjective norm is the decision one makes from the social obligation of those who influence one's life, such as family members, colleagues and co-workers (Swidi, Huque, Hafeez and Shariff, 2014). SN significantly influences individuals' decision-making (Utami, 2017), as it acts as a catalyst between attitude and individual norms for
conceptualising a purchasing decision (Liu, Liu and Mo, 2020). According to researchers (Bakti, Sumaedi, Astrini, Rakhmawati, Yarmen and Damayanti, 2020); (Shakil, Jamil, Latif, Ramayah, Ai Leen, Memon and Ullah, 2019); (Kumar and Smith, 2018), subjective norms play a significant role in determining tourist buying intent for ethnic or local food. At the same time, Budiman and Wijaya (2014) found a positive correlation between SN and BI. Moreover, a study conducted by Shin, Hancer and Song (2016) on local food buying intentions confirmed that subjective norms directly or indirectly influence consumers' local food buying intentions. Thus, in light of the findings above, the following hypothesis is posited:

**Hypothesis 2:** Tourists' subjective norms towards food significantly impact their intention to buy local foods in Uttarakhand.

### 2.4) **PERCEIVED BEHAVIORAL CONTROL (PBC)**

Perceived behavioural control evolved as an extension of the “Theory of Reasoned Action” (Ajzen, 1991). It relates to an individual’s perceptions about their willingness to carry out a particular activity. Studies have also shown that perceived behaviour control impacts both buying intentions and buying behaviour (Dermott, Oliver, Svenson, Simnadis, Beck, Coltman, Iverson, Caputi and Sharma, 2015). Studies with statistical evidence also confirm perceived behaviour control (PBC) as a strong indicator of buying intention (Menozzi, Sogari, Veneziani, Simoni and Mora, 2017). While in a few studies, it is also shown that PBC has a significant impact on consumer intent to purchase and actual purchasing behaviour (Giampietri, Verneau, Giudice, Carfora and Finco 2018). Moreover, few researchers found PBC as a key influencer in the framework of purchase intention and a strong determinant of buying intention (Lim and An, 2021); (Aitken, Watkins, Williams and Kean, 2020); (Shin and Hancer, 2016); (Gronhoj, Bech Larsen, Chan and Tsang, 2012). Thus, we can formulate the following hypothesis based on the above review:
Hypothesis 3: Tourists perceived behavioural control towards food significantly impacts their intention to buy local foods in Uttarakhand.

2.5) FOOD NEOPHOBIA

Pliner and Hobden (1992, p. 105) indicate that food neophobia is an unwillingness of a consumer to try new foods, including meals, delicacies, and cuisine Studies based on food and tourism have classified food neophobia as high food neophobia and low food neophobia (Çanakçı and Birdir, 2020); (Lai, Wang and Lattimore, 2020); (Lee, Park and Ahn, 2019). Low food neophobic is more likely to try familiar and unfamiliar foods, resulting in a more diversified diet (Svendsen, Frost, and Olsen 2017). Conversely, Caber, Yilmaz, Kiliçarslan and Ozturk (2018) argued that those with a high food-neophobia trait are less likely to try new meals. Local food is among the unique foods that have a significant connection with consumers’ neophobic behaviour (Freire and Gertner, 2020), making it a vital component to be investigated as a moderator, especially in research based on food-based tourism (Lai et al., 2020).

Food neophobia is vital as a moderator, especially regarding tourists and novel foods (Hsu, Robinson and Scott, 2018). Studies in this context have found that tourists with high food neophobia travel less than those with lower food neophobia (Jaeger, Rasmussen and Prescott, 2017). Moreover, different levels of food neophobia exhibit different psychological and behavioural characteristics like trust and well-being (Huang, Bai, Zhang and Gong, 2019). To overcome such traits, awareness about the food plays a significant role, as it reduces the level of food neophobia and improves the tourists' dining experiences. Furthermore, studies have confirmed a better correlation between behaviour and intentions when a moderating variable is employed (Kashif, Hong, Naseem, Khan, Akram and Rehman, 2021). In the context of local food, FN has been identified as the most crucial variable influencing the relationship between buying intention and actual buying behaviour (Debnath, Nath, Pervin and Hossain, 2020); (Dimitrovski and Crespi-Vallbona, 2017). As such, FN has also been validated as a key variable influencing tourists' choice of destination (Jang, 2021). Thus, based on the arguments outlined above, the following hypotheses are proposed:
Hypothesis 4: Food neophobia moderates the relationship between tourists' attitudes toward local food and buying intentions.

Hypothesis 5: Food neophobia moderates the relationship between tourists' subjective norms towards local food and buying intentions.

Hypothesis 6: Food neophobia moderates the relationship between tourists' perceived behaviour control towards local food and buying intentions.

3. DEVELOPMENT OF THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Behavioural intention is the only indicator of buying intention (Ajzen, 1991). According to the literature review, TPB was found to be the most appropriate framework to assess tourists' intentions to buy local food in this study. Findings have reflected flavour, wellness, cost, emphatic value and social status as persuasions for attitude towards sustainable and local food (Rousta and Jamshidi, 2020). In addition, subjective norms positively impact tourist intentions, leading to increased food events and buying intent (Levitt et al., 2019). Similarly, perceived behavioural control prompts a person to make food choices considering health, safety, and availability factors (Aitken et al., 2020). In summary, academic literature indicates that ATT, SN, and PBC substantially impact individuals buying intentions toward food. Furthermore, food neophobia is perceived as a moderating variable influencing tourists' local food purchasing intent (Figure 1). Therefore, based on the review of the literature and developed hypotheses, a conceptual framework is proposed for the study.
4. METHOD

4.1) DEVELOPMENT OF THE SURVEY INSTRUMENT

The present study aims to evaluate six hypotheses. A survey of tourists visiting Uttarakhand was conducted to achieve this aim. A questionnaire of 24 statements with a five-point Likert scale was developed, keeping all constructs aligned with the mentioned literature. Fourteen statements of ATT, SN, PBC and BI have been adapted from various types of research, as shown in appendix, while ten statements on the food neophobia scale (FNS) have been adapted from Pliner and Hobden (1992).

The FNS was assessed on a five-point Likert scale based on how many respondents agreed with each item. After inversion of the positive items, a food neophobia scale with an envisaged 10-50 range was calculated by aggregating the various item values. The FNS score of all respondents in this study had a mean of 27.3 (SD = 5.1; range = 10-50). The mean was utilized as the break-off point for classifying tourists into high and low food
neophobia; as a result, those who scored equivalent to or greater than the mean was classified as high neophobic, while those who scored below were classified as low neophobic (Schnettler, Hoger, Orellana, Miranda, Lobos, Sepúlveda, Sanchez, Zapata, Denegri, Grunert and Oñate, 2017; (Schnettler, Grunert, Zapata, Orellana, Sepúlveda, Lobos, Hueche and Höger, 2017).

In addition, pilot research was conducted to assess the instrument's validity and reliability. One of the most widely employed reliability testing tools, Cronbach's alpha, was employed (Ellen A. Drost, 2011). Similarly, an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was used to test the construct validity of the study. The Cronbach's Alpha value for the survey instrument was $\alpha = 0.904$, an acceptable range (Hair, Sarstedt, Matthews and Ringle, 2016).

4.2) DATA COLLECTION AND SAMPLING

The data for the study was gathered using the survey approach. The tourists visiting Uttarakhand were invited to participate in the survey between December 10, 2020, and March 10, 2021. Uttarakhand is chosen as a research site as it has been rated as one of India's most famous tourist destinations. The study's sample consists of tourists who visited various destinations in Uttarakhand for spiritual, cultural, and recreational tourism. The current study distributed the survey among 300 tourists visiting Uttarakhand, of which 266 were found valid and usable. In terms of the most potent sample size to fulfill the SEM requirements, the minimum configuration is 200 (Wolf, Harrington, Clark and Miller, 2013). Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the tourist flow in the region was uneven in certain areas, hence keeping the quality and quantity of respondents into consideration; questionnaires were distributed using a purposive sampling technique. Purposive sampling is primarily used for highlighting specific population attributes relevant to the research question. Also, this technique allows the researcher to acquire a sample of the desired population in the shortest time with the least cost (Campbell, Greenwood, Prior, Shearer, Walkem, Young, Bywaters, and Walke, 2020).

The data collected through questionnaires were examined using SPSS 23 and AMOS 23, where eventually, structural equation modelling (SEM) analysis was conducted on 266 valid responses. SEM primarily examines and measures the associations between
observed and latent variables (Barrett, 2007). The decision to adopt SEM as a research approach was mainly influenced by comparable studies in which researchers successfully answered similar research problems (Talwar, Jabeen, Tandon, Sakashita and Dhir, 2021); (Tandon, Dhir, Kaur, Kushwah and Salo, 2021).

5. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

5.1) RESPONDENT’S DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

According to respondents' profiles, the majority of tourists were domestic from different regions of India (37.96 per cent) from the north, followed by east (27.45 per cent), west (8.65 per cent), and Southern India (6.4 per cent). International tourists were somewhat limited because of Covid's 19 travel restrictions (19.54 per cent). The proportion of males (52.25%) was slightly higher than the females (47.75%). Most tourists visiting the province were between 30 and 50 years (45.86 percent). As per the survey, Hindus (42.1%) were the most prevalent religion among respondents, followed by Sikhism (20.67%), Christians (19.18%), Buddhists (9.77%) and Islam (8.28%). The study also found that most tourists travelling to Uttarakhand completed their Secondary education.

5.2) EXPLORATORY FACTOR ANALYSIS

Before conducting EFA, a few assumptions must be met; Table 1 confirms that all assumptions of EFA are met.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assumptions of EFA</th>
<th>Conditions</th>
<th>Reference: (Hooper, Coughlan and Mullen 2008)</th>
<th>Assumptions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>sample size is 266</td>
<td>n &gt; 200</td>
<td>(Wang, 2019)</td>
<td>Met</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bartlett’s test of sphericity is significant</td>
<td>p &lt; 0.001</td>
<td>(Field, 2013)</td>
<td>Met</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KMO value is 0.920</td>
<td>measure of sampling &gt; 0.70</td>
<td>(Hutcheson and Sofroniou, 1999)</td>
<td>Met</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Satisfactory communalities values > 0.50 (Field, 2013)
Total variance explained is 68.73% > 50% (Podsakoff and Organ, 1986)
The variance for the first factor is 37.26% < 50% (Podsakoff and Organ, 1986)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assumptions for EFA</th>
<th>Met</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Satisfactory communalities values &gt; 0.50 (Field, 2013)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total variance explained is 68.73% &gt; 50% (Podsakoff and Organ, 1986)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The variance for the first factor is 37.26% &lt; 50% (Podsakoff and Organ, 1986)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Assumptions for EFA

Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) has been done through Varimax, rotated component matrix (RCM) and Principal Component Analysis to reduce dimensions. Rotated component matrix and principal component analysis values ranged between .756 and .855 for attitude; between .707 and .837 for PBC; between .705 and .783 for SN; and between .818 to .852 for buying intention. Since all the values in RCM are greater than 0.7 (Hair, Black, Babin, Anderson and Tatham, 2010), the data has thus been reduced to four components, viz. ATT, PBC, SN and BI.

5.3) CONFIRMATORY FACTOR ANALYSIS

Structural equation modelling is used to identify complex associations among the variables in the proposed model (Hair et al., 2016). Further, confirmatory factor analysis is essential to validate the model’s convergent and discriminant validity before commencing path analysis. CFA, also known as structural factor analysis, measurement model or restricted factor analysis, is often employed in a deductive approach to evaluate hypotheses about unquantified elements of variability that account for the commonalities among a group of scores (Harrington, 2009).

5.4) THE GOODNESS OF FIT INDICES

A hypothesized model is considered acceptable in AMOS if it fulfils specific standards for certain fit indices. Table 2 shows the values of disparate fit indices and their related threshold constraints. This demonstrates that all values above the acceptable levels, excluding the chi-square p-value, could be ascribed to a sample size that is greater than 200 (Bentler and Bonett, 1980). On the other hand, all remaining values make the model viable for acceptance.
### Absolute Fit Indices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fit Index</th>
<th>Limit</th>
<th>Present Study</th>
<th>Acceptability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$\chi^2$</td>
<td>109.321</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>df</td>
<td>71</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>p-value</td>
<td>&gt;0.05</td>
<td>0.002</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$\chi^2 / df$</td>
<td>1.00-5.00</td>
<td>1.540</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RMR</td>
<td>&lt;0.08</td>
<td>0.045</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GFI</td>
<td>&gt;0.90</td>
<td>0.946</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGFI</td>
<td>&gt;0.80</td>
<td>0.920</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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</table>

### Relative Fit Indices

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Fit Index</th>
<th>Limit</th>
<th>Acceptability</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NFI</td>
<td>&gt;0.80</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>PNF</td>
<td>&gt;0.50</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IF</td>
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<tr>
<td>TLI</td>
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### Non-centrality-based indices

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Fit Index</th>
<th>Limit</th>
<th>Acceptability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CFI</td>
<td>&gt;0.90</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PDF</td>
<td>&gt;0.50</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RMS</td>
<td>&lt;0.08</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**Table 2: Goodness of fit indices**

5.5) **CONVERGENT VALIDITY**
To ensure the construct's reliability, all components should have composite reliability (CR) higher than 0.7 (Hair et al., 2016). Furthermore, to meet the desired requirement of convergent validity, the extracted average variance (AVE) must be more than 0.50; additionally, MSV (Maximum Shared Variance) must be lower than AVE (Segars, 1997). Since all the conditions favour the suggested model as summarized in Table 3, this model has convergent validity as an outcome.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Constructs</th>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Factor Loading (Above 0.5)</th>
<th>Composite reliability (Above 0.7)</th>
<th>AVE (Above 0.5)</th>
<th>MSV (Less than AVE)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attitude</td>
<td>ATT1</td>
<td>0.748</td>
<td>0.817</td>
<td>0.599</td>
<td>0.593</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ATT2</td>
<td>0.849</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ATT3</td>
<td>0.718</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived</td>
<td>PBC1</td>
<td>0.715</td>
<td>0.787</td>
<td>0.554</td>
<td>0.399</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>behaviour</td>
<td>PBC2</td>
<td>0.829</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control</td>
<td>PBC3</td>
<td>0.680</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Subjective</td>
<td>SN1</td>
<td>0.684</td>
<td>0.754</td>
<td>0.506</td>
<td>0.499</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norm</td>
<td>SN2</td>
<td>0.707</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SN3</td>
<td>0.741</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Buying Intention</td>
<td>BI1</td>
<td>0.784</td>
<td>0.886</td>
<td>0.609</td>
<td>0.599</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>BI2</td>
<td>0.826</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>BI3</td>
<td>0.757</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>BI4</td>
<td>0.796</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>BI5</td>
<td>0.736</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3. Convergent validity parameters

5.6) DISCRIMINANT VALIDITY

https://doi.org/10.33776/et.v13i1.7174
Discriminant validity describes how each construct in a research model differs from its counterparts. Based on Henseler, Ringle and Sarstedt (2015), the heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) correlation ratio determines discriminant validity. Table 4 shows that all discriminant values are lesser than the HTMT baseline value of 0.85 (Kline, 2015). As a result, discriminant validity is confirmed. This implies that all constructs demonstrate discriminant validity, thereby being distinct from one another.

Table 4: Assessment of Discriminant Validity using HTMT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONSTRUCTS</th>
<th>PI</th>
<th>ATT</th>
<th>PBC</th>
<th>SN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PI</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ATT</td>
<td>0.785</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PBC</td>
<td>0.658</td>
<td>0.643</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SN</td>
<td>0.729</td>
<td>0.698</td>
<td>0.584</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.7. Hypothesis Testing

After confirming the convergent and discriminatory validity, path analyses have been performed on AMOS 23. The outcomes of the numerous hypotheses provided in this investigation are shown in Table 5.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hypothesis</th>
<th>Estimate</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>CR</th>
<th>P</th>
<th>Supported/Not Supported</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$H_1$ Tourists' attitude towards food significantly impacts their intention to buy local foods in Uttarakhand.</td>
<td>0.323</td>
<td>0.103</td>
<td>3.888</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>Supported (p &lt; 0.01)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$H_2$ Tourists' subjective norms towards food significantly impact their intention to buy local foods in Uttarakhand.</td>
<td>0.545</td>
<td>0.115</td>
<td>5.914</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>Supported (p &lt; 0.01)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Parameter</td>
<td>Coefficient</td>
<td>SE</td>
<td>t</td>
<td>p</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>H3</strong> Tourists' perceived behavioural control towards food significantly impacts their intention to buy local foods in Uttarakhand</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.228</td>
<td>0.093</td>
<td>2.869</td>
<td>0.014</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Moderating Effects</strong></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>H4</strong> Food neophobia moderates the relationship between tourists' attitude toward local food and buying intentions.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High food neophobia</td>
<td>0.134</td>
<td>0.056</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.003</td>
<td>***</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low food neophobia</td>
<td>0.458</td>
<td>0.029</td>
<td>14.676</td>
<td>***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical Ratios for Differences between Parameters (z-score)</td>
<td>4.103 (&gt; 2.58)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Supported (p &lt; 0.01)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **H5** Food neophobia moderates the relationship between tourists' subjective norms towards local food and buying intentions. |                |            |    |    |      |       |
| High food neophobia   | 0.875          | 0.045       | 19.531 | *** |
| Low food neophobia    | 0.746          | 0.032       | 25.185 | *** |
| Critical Ratios for Differences between Parameters (z-score) | 1.649 (> 1.64) | | | | Supported (p < 0.10) |

| **H6** Food neophobia moderates the relationship between tourists' |                |            |    |    |      |       |
|                |                |            |    |    |      |       |

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perceived behaviour control towards local food and buying intentions.

<p>| | | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High food neophobia</td>
<td>0.255</td>
<td>0.034</td>
<td>3.453</td>
<td>***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low food neophobia</td>
<td>0.188</td>
<td>0.024</td>
<td>2.833</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Critical Ratios for Differences between Parameters (z-score)  
1.184 (< 1.64) Not Supported

Table 5: Hypothesis Testing

The first hypothesis proposes to check the impact of attitude on tourist intention to purchase local food of Uttarakhand. It is indicated from Table 5 that all the components of the first hypothesis are supported. An attitude of a tourist has the most positive influence on the BI (β =0.323, P =.000), which confirms H1. It signifies that tourist with a positive perception of local food are more prone to buy it. The purpose of the second hypothesis was to investigate the influence of SN on tourist buying intentions toward Uttarakhand local food. Table 5 shows that the second hypothesis's components are also supported. SN was most influenced with (β =0.555, P =.000) as opposed to the attitude, which confirms H2, thus suggesting a greater likelihood of tourists buying local food if their influential peers recommend it and are so motivated to do so.

The third hypothesis was to analyse if PBC influences tourist intentions to buy Uttarakhand local food. Table 5 further indicates that all the components of the third hypothesis are also supported and have a positive influence (β =.228, P=.014) on tourists’ intention to buy local food, which supports H3. This signifies that tourists’ aspirations to purchase local food goods increase once they perceive they can do so.

The fourth hypothesis investigates the moderation of FN on the relationship between the attitude of a tourist toward local food and the intention to buy local food (H4). Contrastingly low food neophobia has more influence (β =.458, P=.000) on BI as compared to high food neophobia (β=.134, P=.003) with (Z score = 4.103 > 2.58). This indicates how low food neophobia positively impacts tourist attitudes toward trying novel food. However, in hypothesis five (H5), the influence of high food neophobia (β=0.875,
P=.000) was greater than low food neophobia (β=0.746, P=.000) when evaluated on the relationship between SN and BI with (Z score=.649 > 1.64) at the 10 per cent level.

The findings portray high food neophobia as more impactful than low food neophobia in the case of the subjective norm. Finally, as per hypothesis six (H6), food neophobia moderates the relationship between perceived behaviour control and intention to buy local food. Contrary to expectations, PBC and BI were not significantly impacted by FN (Z score=1.184 < 1.64), thus concluding that tourist buying intentions towards local food are not influenced by high/low food neophobia if they have certain perceived notions about the local food.

6. DISCUSSION AND FUTURE IMPLICATIONS

This research examined the tourists' intentions to buy local food with the help of TPB. The paper primarily explored the impact of ATT, SN, and PBC on tourists' intentions to buy local food items. The results of the research corroborate those with the recent literature (Jang, 2021); (Shakil et al., 2019); (Hiram,Ernest,Jun and Francis, 2016). When it comes to buying local food, attitude matters a lot since it encapsulates consumer tastes, health, food image, and preferences (Shin and Hancer, 2016). This study sheds light on how tourists think about local food, allowing marketers to draft policies accordingly.

The association between attitude and buying intent is significant and widely validated by previous research (Shin et al., 2016), and so were the study results. The most common attributes for attitude regarding local food have always been health, local environment, and local economy (Aprile, Caputo and Nayga, 2016); (Kumar and Smith, 2018). Thus, to increase the intention to buy local food of Uttarakhand, marketers must emphasize its benefits in terms of nutrition and therapeutic value. Secondly, the influence of SN on local food BI portrays the social impact on one's decision.

The results back up previous research by Vabø and Hansen. (2016), who found a positive association between subjective norms and consumers' intention to purchase domestic food items. The substantial relationship between SN and local food BI suggests that local food marketers should use a social sphere to boost local food buying.
The positive relationship between PBC and local food BI implies that when tourists conceive fewer impediments and issues in buying local food, the possibilities of purchase increase. The finding corroborates the previous research by Hsu, Robinson and Scott (2018), who identified a positive association between PBC and the intent to buy traditional foods.

The findings also show food neophobia as a pertinent moderator influencing the relationship between ATT and Uttarakhand local food BI. Food neophobia is most prevalent in tourists with a low FN personality trait, as shown in Table - 5. To be more precise, both constructs connect only when tourists exhibit Personality traits of FN. This study confirms the findings of previous research by Hsu, et al.,(2020); Wu et al. (2016); Kim,Jang and Kim (2014) where a tourist with low FN is more likely to try new foods. Therefore, the purchase intention of this type of tourist is more potent when they are optimistic about the local food of Uttarakhand.

This study also examined whether FN moderated the relationship between SN and BI. According to the findings, food neophobia fortifies the connection between subjective norms and buying intent. Table 5 indicates how the relationship becomes more evident when the tourists have an increased level of FN.

The study's findings indicate that higher food-neophobia tourists are more inclined to purchase Uttarakhand local food through peer pressure than low food-neophobia tourists. One rationale for this behaviour is that tourists with a high level of FN resist sampling 'unfamiliar' foods. Although, the idea of unfamiliarity differs from the concept of the subjective norm when tourists try the local food of Uttarakhand through family and friends. In contrast, perceived societal pressure increases the BI of tourists with a high FN level against tourists with a low FN level, who sample new cuisines more readily, making the opinions of others less significant. This result has been supported by previous research by Kim et al., (2014).

However, the absence of a moderating influence on the PBC and BI relationship is potentially attributable to the truth that tourists other than Uttarakhand mainly focus on pilgrimage rather than food. Secondly, despite unfamiliar with Uttarakhand cuisine, most tourists are not strangers to Uttarakhand and its food. Uttarakhand food caries a reputation as "Satvik food" (Bisht, 2020), which means virtuous or purest form of food;
apart from that, the place is known for various indigenous medicinal plants across the globe (Bargali, Kumar and Singh, 2022); (Khajuria, Manhas, Kumar and Bisht, 2021); Kumar, Dubey and Maheshwari, 2018); (Tyagi, Dhar and Sharma, 2016). As a result, their apprehension or reluctance towards Uttarakhand food does not impact or change their intention to eat it. Individuals may even refuse to try the option when given a choice (Ting Ariff, Zakuan, Sulaiman, Saman, 2016). The finding of Kim et al., (2014) and the consequent discussion explain why few tourists behave differently when buying local food in Uttarakhand.

Furthermore, tourist preference analysis could enable marketers or decision-makers to accurately analyse the buying intent for locally produced food, which is both widely available and affordable to specific buying groups. Since most crops grown in Uttarakhand are organic, the current study intends to promote a destination image known for sustainable products to encourage future revenue opportunities for local farmers (Lakhera, Mishra and Kumar, 2020). The study also contributes academically to literature based on food tourism; moreover, study results may contribute to opening new ventures and entrepreneurship initiatives relevant to target audiences; as a result, new employment opportunities could be generated in the province, and the challenges of migration from the hills could be acknowledged.

7. CONCLUSION

By applying the TPB, this study provides insight into the motivations behind buying locally produced food. The data confirms the basic TPB model, determining the intention to buy Uttarakhand local food and FN as a moderator impacting tourist buying intent. Further, the tourist attitude towards local food was found to significantly affect local food buying intention. The propensity to buy local food was significantly influenced by subjective norms, while PBC is relevant at 95%. It seems that the opinions of others have a substantial and positive impact on tourists’ decisions while locally grown food has a lot to go before becoming widely available; therefore, accessibility does not remain a barrier to buying local food in Uttarakhand. FN has been proven as a moderator of the local food BI. The uniqueness of this research is the broadening of TPB by incorporating a moderator with two different levels, which is believed to impact the relationship depicted.
in the basic model. The results also reveal that food neophobia is a significant moderator of the association between attitude toward local food and buying intention. The impact is more pronounced for tourists with low food neophobia.

Moreover, this research found that buying intentions increased when a high food-neophobic tourist had a positive attitude towards the local food of Uttarakhand. Such results suggest that a positive attitude significantly affects buying intent. This study also explored food neophobia's impact on the relationship between subjective norms and BI. The results reveal that food neophobia amplifies the association between attitude and buying intention. Specifically, as discussed above, the relationship is more robust when tourists have a low level of food neophobia. To conclude, the study does not support the moderating influence of FN on the relationship between PBC and BI. As discussed above, the awareness about the properties of the local food is known by many, thus rejecting the pre-assumption in H6.

8. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE SCOPE

There are certain limitations to this study. Tourist nationality was not evenly distributed in most of the sample as most respondents were domestic (Indian) due to Covid-19 travel regulations. Secondly, since the sample was taken from the holy land of Uttarakhand, most tourists visit the place with a strong belief in pilgrimage, making the PBC – buying intent relationship least influenced by food neophobia. Hence there is a possibility that in other locations, despite the application of the same measurement instrument and investigation, distinct outcomes might be achieved by researchers.

References


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Kim, Y. G., Jang, S. Y., & Kim, A. K. (2014). Application of the theory of planned behavior to genetically modified foods: Moderating effects of food technology neophobia. *Food Research International*, 62, 947–954. [https://doi.org/10.1016/j.foodres.2014.03.057](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.foodres.2014.03.057)


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Appendix: Survey items

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Constructs</th>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Referred to</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attitude</td>
<td>After trying the local food of Uttarakhand, I found it very pleasant</td>
<td>(Torri, Tuccillo, Bonelli, Piraino and Leone 2020)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>After trying the local food of Uttarakhand, I found it very healthy and safe.</td>
<td>(Ferrari et al., 2020)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>After trying the local food of Uttarakhand, I felt very positive</td>
<td>(Roy and Ballantine, 2020)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Most people who are connected to me want me to try the local food of Uttarakhand.</td>
<td>(Liu et al., 2020)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subjective Norm</td>
<td>My family and friends have recommended me to try the local food of Uttarakhand.</td>
<td>(Shakil et al., 2019a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>People whose opinions I value most would prefer me to try the local food of Uttarakhand.</td>
<td>(J. J. Kim and Hwang, 2020)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived Behavioral Control</td>
<td>Whether I will eventually buy local food of Uttarakhand is entirely up to me.</td>
<td>(Lim and An, 2021)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I believe procuring local food of Uttarakhand will be easy.</td>
<td>(Huang,Dai,Xu 2020)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I am very much sure that if I want, I can try the local food of Uttarakhand during my stay in the state.</td>
<td>(Ferreira,Cunha, Finlayson, Caldas,Jamar,Bandoni,Pisani and Rosso 2020)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I am intended to buy the local food of Uttarakhand during this visit.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I want to include the local food of Uttarakhand in my diet during this visit</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buying Intention</td>
<td>I hope to incorporate the local food of Uttarakhand in my menu during this visit.</td>
<td>(Iwaya, Cardoso, Júnior and Steil 2020)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I will include local food of Uttarakhand in my daily consumption during this visit.</td>
<td>(Kim and Han, 2010)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(F. Hsu, 2014)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I would include the local food of Uttarakhand in my diet during this visit.

Source: