



## “Factors Influencing Consumer Buying Behaviour of Organic Food: A study in Tirunelveli District”

### KEY WORDS

Organic food, Attitude, Knowledge about organic food, Health consciousness, Environmental concern

**Dr.B.Subha**

Asst.prof.Dept of BBA Sri Sarada College for women  
Tirunelveli-11

**Smt.N.Lavanya**

Head .Dept of BBA Sri Sarada College for Women  
Tirunelveli-11

### ABSTRACT

Nowadays Organic food products are considered as healthy by most of the consumers because it is free from pesticides and chemical residues. The aim of this study is to know about the demographic characteristics of respondents and about factors that influence consumers to buy organic food products. This study was based on primary survey of 136 respondents living in the Tirunelveli District. Customers were approached randomly based on convenience sampling, using a structured questionnaire.

### 1. Introduction

In today's scenario organic foods are becoming more significant, as people have become more and more health oriented. Consumers are ready to pay more to protect their health from diseases. Consumers are interested in buying organic food because it is free from pesticides and chemical residuals. People nowadays are accepting organic food for its various perceived benefit over the conventional food. Organic farming gives more importance to the conservation of Ecology, which improves the quality of environment. The purpose of this study titled “Factors Influencing Consumer Buying Behaviour of Organic Food: A study in Tirunelveli District” is to gain knowledge about the demographic characteristics of respondents and about factors that influence consumers purchase decision in Tirunelveli district. This study was based on primary survey of 136 respondents living in the Tirunelveli District. Customers were approached randomly using a structured questionnaire.

### 2. Review of Literature

#### 2.1. Health consciousness

Health consciousness best describes those “consumers [who] are aware and concerned about their state of well being and are motivated to improve and/or maintain their health and quality of life, as well as preventing ill health by engaging in healthy behaviours and being health conscious regarding health. Such individuals tend to be aware of, and involved with, nutrition and physical fitness” (Kraft and Goodell 1993). (Michaelidou et al 2007, Fotopolous et al 2000, Saher et al 2006) in their article Exploring the gap between attitudes and behaviour; Understanding why consumers buy or do not buy organic food, Lockie et al (2002) found that by far the strongest motivator for buying organic was health. Their study involved focus groups and laddering interviews with 181 regular and occasional consumers of organic food. They found that the main motives which were mentioned in the focus groups were health consciousness, the assumed higher health value, and social aspects including support for local farming, fair trade, and further down the scale environmental protection. The strongest link in the main ladders involved personal health, well-being, and quality of life. People buy organic products because they perceive them to contain no pesticide residues and to be better for their health. Although, the results therefore confirm health as an important factor they also claim that it is not the only motivator. Similarly, Roddy, Cowan and Hutchinson (1996) stated that people who are more concerned about food safety hold positive attitude towards organic food.

#### 2.2. Knowledge about organic food

Consumer knowledge determines to have a positive influence on their attitude towards organic food, according to Chryssochoidis, (2000); Padel and Foster, (2005). Knowledge of consumer is categorized as subjective knowledge, objective knowledge and prior experience (Brucks, 1985). Subjective knowledge refers to what the consumers perceive that they know. In other words, it is called as self-

rated knowledge. It represents for the confidence of an individual about their knowledge. The low level of subjective knowledge results in the lack of confidence (Chryssochoidis, 2000; Padel and Foster, 2005).

Objective knowledge is what the consumers actually know and finally prior experience is defined as what the consumers have experienced before (Brucks, 1985). Regarding the correlation between consumer knowledge and their attitude, Stobbelaar et al. (2007) claimed that the more knowledge consumers have about organic food, the more positive it is in their attitude. In addition, prior experience plays an essential role to determine consumer attitude since the more experienced consumers have, the more positive attitude they would have (Sørensen et al., 1996). Similarly, Roddy et al. (1996) argued that consumers who have consumed organic food before tend to have more positive attitude in comparison to non-experienced consumers. Consumer knowledge about organic food could be gained from different sources. Gracia and De Magistris (2007) demonstrated that information about organic food which is showed in the market can have a significant influence on subjective knowledge of consumers. Apparently, knowledge regarding organic food is impacted by public administration such as local governments, social media, social networks, notifications from ecological organizations and advertisements. Subsequently, prior experience is also considered as essential factor that influence consumer knowledge towards organic food. Finally, 2nd hypothesis is constructed on the review of these literatures (Gracia and De Magistris, 2007).

#### 2.3. Environmental Concern

According to Vermeir and Verbeke (2006) and Chen (2007) consumers that are more involved in organic and environmental friendly related issues, such as environmental protection tend to have positive attitude towards organic food and strong intention to purchase. Environmental behaviour refers to all actions of people that are significantly related to the nature of environment, such as consumption of environmental resources. There is a broad range of behaviours that falls within the notion of environmental behaviour such as the production and consumption of food, buying a house, transportation and shopping (Jager, 2000). Many studies have investigated the attitude consumers have towards organic food and they have found three main factors that is the same in different countries and cultures; organic food is seen as healthier, more environmental-friendly and better tasting than conventional food. However, it is being argued that even if consumers have positive attitude towards organic food the number of consumers who regularly purchase organic food is low (Aertsens et al., 2009).

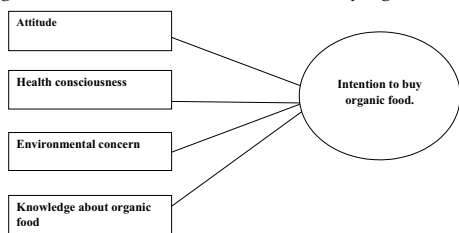
#### 2.4. Attitude

Attitude is a psychological construct (Jung, 1971), which is shaped by Cognition (thought), values (beliefs) and affection (emotions) toward

a particular object (Hoyer and MacInis, 2004; Dossey and Keegan, 2008). Thøgersen (2009a) and Michaelidou and Hassan (2008) revealed that "belief" about the consequences (better taste, healthier, environmentally friendly) is instrumental in leading consumers toward organic food consumption. Roitner-Schobesberger et al. (2008) further stressed that health consciousness factor was one of the main driving forces in selecting organic food in Thailand. Moreover, while forming cognition process in buying products, environment friendliness was considered as a major element in opting for organic food in Norway (Honkanen et al., 2006). Furthermore, positive attitude related to product labeling, believability of advertising and certification from opinion leaders builds trust and confidence while choosing products. Trustworthiness was considered as major emotional variable for Italian buyers (Perrini et al., 2010). In the light of aforementioned literature, it is hypothesized that attitude has a positive effect on organic food buying intention

**3. The Theoretical model proposed**

Based on litterature review, below is a outlined theoretical model (Figure 1) to highlight the factors that influence purchase decision of organic food consumers in Tirunelveli District. The theoretical model shows hypothetical relationships between the factors Attitude, Health consciousness, Environmental concern, Knowledge about organic food and Consumer intention to buy organic food.



**Figure 1 Theoretical model proposed**

As shown ( fig1)in the theoretical model proposed research hypotheses for this study are listed as Follows:

- H1:** There is a positive relationship between health consciousness and intention to buy organic food
- H2:** There is a positive relationship between attitude and intention to buy organic food.
- H3:** There is a positive relationship between knowledge about organic food and intention to buy organic food
- H4:** There is a positive relationship between environmental concern and intention to buy organic food.

**4. Methodology:**

The Tirunelveli District has eleven talukas namely Tirunelveli, Palayamkottai, Sankarankoil, Ambasamudram, Nanguneri, Radhapuram, Tenkasi, Shenkottai, Alangulam, Veerakeralampudur and Sivagiri. These eleven talukas were treated as clusters. Then based on convenience sampling, respondents were randomly selected from each talukas. Both Primary and Secondary data are collected for this study. Primary data are collected through a structured questionnaire. Secondary data are collected from periodicals, journals, internet and newspapers. Reliability Analysis was conducted to measure confidence or consistency (degree of correlation between items) for attitude, health consciousness, Knowledge about organic food and environmental concern. Internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha coefficient) of the four variables measured is 0.792 for attitude, 0.854 for health consciousness, 0.764, 0.821 for knowledge about organic food and 0.852 for environmental concern. For each of the four variables, Cronbach's alpha coefficient is greater than 0.700 (acceptable limit - Nunnally, 1978) which means that the instrument is reliable.

**5. Tools used for Analysis:**

Frequency Distributions, Reliability Analysis, Linear regressions.

**6. Results and Discussions**

**Table 1 Demographics Profile of overall sample**

Variables		Frequency	Percentage
<b>Gender</b>	Male	60	44.11%
	Female	76	56%
<b>Age</b>	Below 35	64	47.05%
	31-50	40	29.4%
	Above 50	32	24%
<b>Education</b>	SSLC	28	21%
	Higher Secondary	34	25%
	UG	52	38.2%
	PG	12	9%
	Others	10	7.3%
<b>Consumption of organic food</b>	Buyers	105	77.2%
	Non Buyers	31	23%
<b>Marital Status</b>	Single	65	48%
	Married	71	52.2%
<b>Family income per month in Rs</b>	Less than 15,000	36	26.4%
	15,001-25,000	56	41.1%
	25,001-35,000	29	21.3%
	Above 35,000	15	11.02%
<b>Frequency of consumption</b>	Never	31	23%
	Seldom	28	21%
	Sometimes	45	33%
	Always	32	24%

It is observed that maximum number of respondents falls in below 30 years of age category. 29.4% of respondents belong to the age category between 31 and 50. The above table 1 shows that 24% of the respondents belong to the age category of above 50. The above table 1 reveals that, 44.11% of the respondents are male and 56% of the respondents are female. 48% of the respondents are single, 52.2% of the respondents are married, 21% of the respondents belong to SSLC level, 25% of the respondents belong to HSC level, 38.2% of the respondents belong to UG Level, 9% of the respondents belong to the PG Level, and 7.3% of the respondents belong to the Other Qualification. 26.4% of the respondents belong to the Income level of less than Rs.15000, 41.1% of the respondents belong to the Income level of Rs.15001-Rs.25000, 21.3% of the respondents belong to the Income level of Rs.25001- Rs.35000, 11.02% of the respondents belong to the income level of above Rs.35,000. 77.2% of respondents are buyers of organic food and 23% of respondents are non buyers of organic food. 23% of respondents never buy organic food. 21% of respondents seldom buys organic food. 33% of respondents sometimes buys organic food. 24% of respondents always buy organic food.

**Relationship between Influencing Factors and Intention to Buy Organic Food Products**

**Table 2: Linear regression between health consciousness and intention to buy organic food**

Model	Un Standardised		Standardised Coefficient	t	sig
	B	Std. Error			
1 (constant)					
Health conciousness	-3.769	.316	.813	-11.241	.000
	1.927	.112		18.852	.000
Adjusted R=0.753					

Linear regression was used to test the relationship between health consciousness and intention to buy organic food. The result is presented in the table 2. The estimated slope (B=1.927, p<0.001) and adjusted R=0.753 which indicates the strong positive relationship between the two variables. The independent variable health consciousness is good predictor for the dependent variable intention to buy organic food. Therefore the hypothesis 1 is confirmed.

**Table3: Linear regression between attitude and intention to buy organic food**

Model	Un Standardised Coefficient		Standardised Coefficient	t	sig
	B	Std. Error			
1 (constant)					
Attitude	-3.654	.412	.618	-8.526	.000
	1.942	.132			
Adjusted R=0.379					

Linear regression was used to test the relationship between attitude and intention to buy organic food. The result is presented in the table 3. The estimated slope (B=1.942, p<0.001) and adjusted R=0.379 which indicates the strong positive relationship between the two variables. The independent variable attitude is good predictor for the dependent variable intention to buy organic food. Therefore the hypothesis 2 is confirmed.

**Table 4 : Linear regression between knowledge about organic food and intention to buy organic food**

Model	Un Standardised Coefficient		Standardised Coefficient	t	sig
	B	Std. Error			
1(Constant)					
Knowledge about organic food	.821	.213	.546	3.521	.000
	.291	.033			
Adjusted R=0.324					

Linear regression was used to test the relationship between knowledge about organic food and intention to buy organic food. The result is presented in the table 4. The estimated slope (B=.291, p<0.001) and adjusted R=0.324 which indicates the moderate positive relationship between the two variables. The independent variable knowledge about organic food is good predictor for the dependent variable intention to buy organic food. Therefore the hypothesis 3 is confirmed.

**Table: 5 Linear regression between environmental concern and intention to buy organic food**

Model	Un Standardised Coefficient		Standardised Coefficient	t	sig
	B	Std. Error			
1 (Constant)					
Concern for environment	1.150	.156	.449	7.308	.000
	.261	.029			
Adjusted R=0.199					

Linear regression was used to test the relationship between environmental concern and intention to buy organic food. The result is presented in the table 5. The estimated slope (B=.261, p<0.001) and adjusted R=0.199 which indicates the moderate positive relationship between the two variables. The independent variable environmental concern is good predictor for the dependent variable intention to buy organic food. Therefore the hypothesis 4 is confirmed.

**7. Conclusion**

It is clear from the study that there are various factors influencing consumer to buy organic food product. Respondents of age group below 30 prefer to buy organic food as compared to other age groups. The study also shows that women are buying organic food more frequently than men. Consumers have positive attitude towards organic food. Variables like Health Consciousness, Environmental Concern, Knowledge about organic food and Attitude have a positive relationship with intention to buy organic food. All these variables are good predictors for the intention to buy organic food.

**8. References:**

1. Aertsens, J., Verbeke, W., Mondelaers, K. and Van Huylenbroeck, G. (2009), "Personal

determinants of organic food consumption: a review", *British Food Journal*, Vol. 111 No. 10, pp.1140-1167.

2. Brucks, M. (1985), "The effects of product class knowledge on information search behavior", *Journal of Consumer Research*, Vol. 12 No 1, pp.1-16.

3. Chen, M., F., (2007), "Consumer attitudes and purchase intentions in relation to organic foods in Taiwan: moderating effects of food-related personality traits", *Food Quality and Preference*, Vol. 18 No. 7, pp. 1008-1021.

4. Chryssochoidis, G. (2000), "Repercussions of consumer confusion for late introduced differentiated products", *European Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 34, pp. 705-722.

5. Ellen, P.S. (1994), "Do we know what we need to know – objective and subjective knowledge effects on pro-ecological behaviors", *Journal of Business Research*, Vol. 30 No.1, pp. 43-52.

6. Gracia, A. and de Magistris, T. (2007), "Organic food product purchase behaviour: a pilot study for urban consumers in the South of Italy", *Spanish Journal of Agricultural Research*, Vol. 5 No. 4, pp. 439-451

7. Honkanen, P., Verplanken, B. and Olsen, S.O. (2006), "Ethical values and motives driving organic food choice", *Journal of Consumer Behaviour*, Vol. 5 No. 5, pp.420-430.

8. Hoyer, W.D. and MacInnis, D.J. (2004), *Consumer Behavior*, Houghton Mifflin, Boston, MA

Jager, W. (2000), *Modelling Consumer Behavior*, Groningen: University of Groningen

Jung, C.G. (1971), *Psychological Types*, Collected Works, Vol. 6, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ

Kraft, F.B. and Goddell, P.W. (1993) "Identifying the health conscious consumer", *Journal of Health Care Marketing*, 13, Pp.18-25.

9. Lockie, S., K. Mummery. (2002) "Eating Green: Motivations behind organic food consumption in Australia" *Sociologia Ruralis* 42(2002) Pp.23-40.

10. Michaelidou, Nina and Louise M. Hassan. (2008) "The role of health consciousness, food safety concern and ethical identity on attitudes and intentions towards organic food" *International Journal of Consumer Studies* 32 pp.163-170

11. Padel, S. and Foster, C. (2005), "Exploring the gap between attitudes and behavior – understanding why consumers buy or do not buy organic food", *British Food Journal*, Vol. 107 No.8, pp.606-625

12. Perrini, F.S., Castaldo, N.M. and Tencati, A. (2010), "The impact of corporate social responsibility associations on trust in organic products marketed by mainstream retailers: a study of Italian consumers", *Business Strategy and the Environment*, Vol. 19 No. 8, pp. 512-526.

13. Roddy, G., Cowan, C. and Hutchinson, G. (1996), "Consumer attitudes and behaviour to organic foods in Ireland", *Journal of International Consumer Marketing*, Vol. 9 No. 2, pp. 1-19

14. Roitner-Schobesberger, B., Darnhofer, I., Somsok, S. and Vogl, C.R. (2008), "Consumer perceptions of organic foods in Bangkok, Thailand", *Food Policy*, Vol. 33 No. 2, pp. 112-121

15. Stobbelaar, D.J., Casimir, G., Borghuis, J., Marks, I., Meijer, L. and Zebeda, S. (2007), "Adolescents attitudes towards organic food: a survey of 15- to 16-year old school children", *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, Vol. 31 No 4, pp. 349-356.

16. Sorensen, E. G., Bech-Larsen, T., Nielsen, N.A. and Grunert, K. (1996), The development of models for understanding and predicting consumer food choice – individual progress report 1996 AIR contract PL 921315, Aarhus: The Aarhus School of Business.

17. Thøgersen, J. (2009a), "Consumer decision making with regard to organic food products", in Vaz, M.T.D.N., Vaz, P., Nijkamp, P. and Rastoin, J.L. (Eds), *Traditional Food Production Facing Sustainability: A European Challenge*, Ashgate, Farnham, pp. 173-194

18. Vermeir, I. and Verbeke, W. (2006), "Sustainable food consumption: exploring the consumer's attitude-behavioural intention" gap", *Journal of Agricultural and Environmental Ethics*, Vol. 19, No. 2, pp.542-553.