



Factors Influencing Organic Food Purchase Intention in Manmunai North Division of The Batticaloa District

V.Sinthuja and A.Soundaralingam¹

Abstract

The main objective of this study is to identify the degree of the influence of the various factors on the purchase intention of organic food in Manmunai North DS Division of the Batticaloa District. Hence, this study examines the extent of the influence of the subjective norms of the consumer, personal attitude of the consumer, perceived behavior control of the consumer, and the health consciousness of the consumer. In order to achieve the objective this study mainly the primary data has been considered. The primary data was collected through the questionnaire from 100 organic food consumers who have been living in Manmunai North division of the Batticaloa district and regularly purchasing the organic food. Information was also collected from organic food sellers and the consumers through the interview method. Collected primary data were analysed using univariate analysis method. The findings of this study revealed that the subjective norms of the consumer, personal attitude of the consumer, perceived behavior control of the consumer and the health consciousness of the consumer have a high level of influence on the organic food purchase intention in Manmunai North DS Division of the Batticaloa District.

Keywords: Subjective norm, Personal attitude, Perceived behavior control, Health consciousness, Organic food.

¹Senior Lecturer, Department of Economics, Eastern University Sri Lanka.

1. Background of the study

The district of Batticaloa is located in the central part of the Eastern province. This district is divided into 14 administrative divisions. Manmunai North DS division is one of them. The total area of this division is 75Sq.Km. It is an urban area. The total population of this DS division is 78480 (Divisional Secretariat- 2019). As this division consisted of relatively more educated people, awareness on the consumption of organic food has been increasing in recent years. Vegetables and fruits produced in organic method in various parts of the Batticaloa district are brought to this division for marketing. Authorities have set stalls for the sellers of organic foods in the area which is very close to the Kallady Bridge. Consumers visit and purchase the organic foods every day.

Organic food, fresh or processed food produced by organic farming methods. Organic food is grown without the use of synthetic chemicals, such as human made pesticides and fertilizers, and does not contain genetically modified organisms (Encyclopedia Britannica).

Organic food consumption has been increasing in every country. Specially, in the most developed countries like United States, Germany, France and some other countries the value of organic food production has been increasing year by year, due to the increase in the consumption of organic food. Not only in developed countries, but also in developing countries the demand for organic

products has been increasing in considerable size. Some studies in Sri Lanka reveal that the awareness regarding to the purchase of organic food has been increasing in recent years. As the food consumers of Sri Lanka realize that in the production process of the vegetables and fruits, farmers use chemical fertilizers and pesticides, and this caused for many health hazards. Even though the health consciousness is regarded as the main factor which influence in the consumption of organic food, studies show that there are some other factors also influence in the consumption of organic food. The main objective of the study is to find those factors and the degrees of influence of each factor in organic food purchase intention in the DS division of Manmunai North.

This study focuses on understanding the factors that influencing consumer purchase intention regarding organic food in the Manmunai North division of Batticaloa district. Earlier, this type of studies was conducted in various countries by several researchers. The theory of planned behavior is one of the models mostly used in this kind of studies. According to this model, three determinants explain behavioral intention. Those are Subjective norms, personal attitudes and perceived behavioral control. These factors predict the intention, which in turn predicts the behavior. This study examines the degree of the influence of the above factors on the purchase intention of organic food in the Manmunai North division. Health consciousness has been taken as an additional factor.

2. Research Problem

In the Batticaloa district, a well-known NGO, World Vision, had initiated a project by which several women groups were established. The members of these groups are mostly from women-headed families. About 50 members of these groups selected for the training in the production of organic food. They are from Vaharai, Palchenai, Kannankuda, Valaichenai, Eravur, Kiran and several other villages. The training was given on the preparation of natural fertilizers, natural pesticides and the methods of natural farming. The vegetables, fruits, honey and dairy products which are produced in natural methods and some other items that are taken from nature, especially from jungles and remote villages, have been brought to the Manmunai North division where the municipality has arranged a marketing complex. Transport arrangements are made by the World Vision. Even though the prices of these organic products are relatively higher than the normal product, people of the Manmunai division area purchase these products with much desire. In early mornings everyday more and more educated people rush to that area for the purchasing of these organic products. The research problem is to what extent the factors of subjective norms, personal attitudes, perceived behavioral control and the health consciousness of the consumers influence on the purchasing intention of organic food in the Manmunai North division of the Batticaloa district.

3. Research Objectives.

The main objective of this research is to find out the degree of the influence of various factors on the purchasing intention of organic food in the Manmunai North division of Batticaloa district. Following are the sub-objectives of this study.

01. To find out the degree of the influence of the subjective norms of the consumers on the purchasing intention of organic food in the Manmunai North division of the Batticaloa district.
02. To find out the degree of the influence of the personal attitudes of the consumers on the purchasing intention of organic food in the Manmunai North division of the Batticaloa district.
03. To find out the degree of the influence of the perceived behavioral control of the consumers on the purchasing intention of organic food in the Manmunai North division of the Batticaloa district.
04. To find out the degree of the influence of the health consciousness of the consumers on the purchasing intention of organic food in the Manmunai North division of the Batticaloa district.

4. Research questions

01. To what extent the subjective norms of the consumers of the Manmunai North division influence on the purchasing intention of organic food?
02. To what extent the personal attitudes of the consumers of the Manmunai North

division influence on the purchasing intention of organic food?

03. To what extent the perceived behavioral control of the consumers of the Manmunai North division influence on the purchasing intention of organic food?

04. To what extent the health consciousness of the consumers of the Manmunai North division influence on the purchasing intention of organic food.

5. Significance of the Study

Generally, the people believe that the purchasing intention of the organic food is determined only by the health consciousness of the consumers. But studies show that there are some other factors also determine the intention. Some of them are psychological factors. Study and discussion on these psychological factors are brought out in this research. Nowadays in the Batticalo district most of the consumers of the organic food are educated people. But in future, this study can create awareness regarding the organic food among the ordinary people too. The producers of the organic food also can be benefited by this study. The demand for these products could be increased. Due to that, the producers can extend the level of production of organic food in future and achieve the economies of scale.

6. Literature Review

Researcher reviewed a number of literatures regarding this study. The theory of planned behavior is one of them. This theory was

proposed by Icek Ajzen in 1985. The theory states that attitude, subject norms and perceived behavioral control together shape an individual's behavioral intentions and behaviors. Attitude refers to the degree to which a person holds a favorable or unfavorable evaluation of a certain product. Subjective norms refer to the perception that others would approve of the decision of whether or not to consume. Perceived behavioral control is defined as the perception of ease or difficulty of performing a particular behavior.

Brijesh Sivathanu in 2015, published a research paper titled "Factors affecting consumer preference towards the organic food purchases" in the Indian journal of science and technology. The results of the study reveal that various factors such as demographic characteristics, educational level, age group, and the higher income of the consumers impacting the consumer preference towards the organic food purchases.

In 2017, a research paper was published in the Journal of Retailing and the Consumer Services by J.Rana and J.Paul titled "Consumer behaviour and purchase intention for organic food". Their finding was health conscious consumers show a growing preference for organic food over the conventionally growing food.

Tiziana De magistris and Azucena Gracia published a paper in British Food Journal in 2008. The title is "The Decision to buy organic food products in Southern Italy".

The results indicate that health attribute and the environment are the most important factors that explain consumer decision making process for organic food products.

In the year of 2019, in the Journal of Sustainability Xuhui wang, Frida pacho, Jia Liu and Redempta Kajangiro published a study paper. The study was done in Tanzania and Kenya. The main results of the study show that personal attitude, health consciousness, and subjective norms are the important factors that influence consumer purchase intentions in relation to organic food.

7. Methodology

This study was carried out with the primary data collection from the organic food consumers of the Manmunai North DS Division of Batticaloa District. 100 organic food consumers were selected as sample. A structured questionnaire, prepared in Lickert

7.1 Decision Criteria

Table 01: Decision Rule for Univariate Analysis

Range	Decision Attributes
$1 \leq X_i \leq 2.5$	Low level of influence.
$2.5 < X_i \leq 3.5$	Moderate level of influence.
$3.5 < X_i \leq 5.0$	High level of influence.

Where X_i = Mean Value of an indicator.

scale was used to collect the data. The questionnaire was adopted from various studies regarding the organic food purchase intention. The questionnaire represents the socio-demographic information about the organic food consumers, and the study variables. Subjective norms, personal attitude, perceived behavior control, and health consciousness towards the organic foods are considered as independent variable and the purchasing intention of organic food is considered as dependent variable. Interviews and discussions with the consumers and the sellers also made by the researcher. The data collected from the organic food consumers through the questionnaire were analysed by the univariate analysis method. The latest version of SPSS package was used to derive the frequencies and the mean values. The average (mean) value will lie between 1 and 5.

8. Results and Discussion

Following results have been obtained in analyzing the data related with the Socio-Demographic Characteristics. Most of the respondents are females (68.6%). Majority of the consumers were between 31-50 years. 48.8 % of the organic food consumers are degree holders. Majority of the respondents are engaged in the government sectors (64%). 26.7% are engaged in farming. Around 64% of the respondents earn between Rs 50001 - Rs 75000 monthly. 26.7% of organic food consumers' monthly incomes lie between Rs 25001 - Rs 50000.

About 91% of the organic food consumers are married.

In analyzing of research data, the following results have been obtained. Regarding the factor of the **subjective norm of the consumers**, table 02 shows the mean values of the responses for all four indicators mentioned in the questionnaire. These

indicators have mean values of 4.03, 3.52, 3.22, and 3.92 respectively. The mean values for the majority of these indicators are greater than 3.5. And the overall mean value for the subjective norm of the consumer is 3.67. It shows that the subjective norm has a high level of influence in organic food purchase intention in MN division of Batticaloa district.

Table 02: Mean values for the factor of Subjective Norm

S.No.	Statements	Mean
07	Most people I value would buy organic food rather than non-organic food.	4.03
08	My family thinks that I should buy organic food rather than non-organic food.	3.52
09	People I value, such as my neighbors, think I should buy organic food.	3.22
10	Most friends whose opinions regarding diet are important to me think that I should buy organic food.	3.92
	Overall mean value for subjective norm	3.67

(Source: Survey Data)

Regarding the factor of **Personal Attitude of the consumer**, Table 3 shows the mean values of the responses for all six indicators mentioned in the questionnaire. These indicators have mean values of 3.35, 3.52, 4.22, 3.53, 4.13 and 3.99 respectively. The mean values for the majority of

these indicators are greater than 3.5. And the overall mean value for the personal attitude of the consumer is 3.79. It shows that personal attitude of the consumer has a high level of influence in organic food purchase intention in the MN division of the Batticaloa district.

Table 03: Mean values for the factor of Personal Attitude

S.No	Statements	Mean
11	I think that purchasing organic food is a good idea.	3.35
12	I think that purchasing organic food is interesting.	3.52
13	I think that purchasing organic food is important.	4.22
14	I think that purchasing organic food is beneficial.	3.53
15	I think that purchasing organic food is wise.	4.13
16	I think that purchasing organic food is favorable.	3.99
	Overall mean value for personal attitude	3.79

(Source: Survey Data)

Regarding the factor of **Perceived Behavior Control of the consumer**, table 04 shows the mean values of the responses for all three indicators mentioned in the questionnaire. These indicators have mean values of 3.98, 3.24, and 3.41 respectively. Here, the mean value for one indicator shows high level influence and for the two other indicators' mean values shows

moderate level of influence. And the overall mean value for the perceived behavior control of the consumers is 3.54, It shows that perceived behavior control of the organic food consumer has a high level of influence in organic food purchasing intention in the MN division of the Batticaloa district.

Table 04: Mean values for the factor of Perceived Behavior Control

S.No	Statements	Mean
17	If I wanted to, I could buy organic food instead of non-organic food.	3.98
18	I think it's easy for me to buy organic food.	3.24
19	It's mostly up to me whether or not to buy organic food.	3.41
	Overall mean value for perceived behavior control	3.54

(Source: Survey Data)

Regarding the factor of the **Health Consciousness of the consumer**, Table 05 shows the mean values of responses for all three indicators mentioned in the

questionnaire. These indicators have mean values of 4.03, 3.52, and 3.22 respectively. Here, the mean values for two indicators show high level influence and the mean

value for one indicator shows moderate level of influence. And the overall mean value for health consciousness of the consumer is 3.59. It shows that the health consciousness

of the consumer has a high level of influence in organic food purchasing intention in the MN division of the Batticaloa District.

Table 05: Mean values for the factor of Health Consciousness

S.No	Statements	Mean
20	I choose food carefully to ensure good health.	4.03
21	I consider myself as a health-conscious consumer.	3.52
22	I often think about health-related issues.	3.22
	Overall mean value for health consciousness	3.59

(Source: Survey Data)

9. Conclusion

Under the title of “Factors influencing organic food purchase intention in Manmunai North DS division of the Batticaloa district”, a study has been completed successfully. Finally the researcher has come to the following conclusions.

The socio-demographic characteristics showed that the most of the respondents are females. Most of the respondents are in the age group of 31-50 years. Majority of the respondents were degree holders and engaged with the government job. The monthly income of the majority of the respondents ranges from Rs 50000 - Rs 75000.

The main results shows that most of the respondents highly agreed that the subjective norms of the consumer, personal attitude of the consumer, perceived behavior control of the consumer, and the health consciousness of the consumer has the high

level of influence on the organic food purchase intention in the Manmunai North DS division of the Batticaloa District.

However, this study only considered only a few factors that influence the intention of organic food purchase. And the research has covered only a small area. Further, future studies are recommended to identify the other influencing factors in different areas.

10. References

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