



7<sup>TH</sup> INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

# Actual Economy

SOCIAL  
CHALLENGES  
AND FINANCIAL  
ISSUES IN XXI CENTURY



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## Factors of consumers' preferences: analyzing and predicting to increase sales of organic food (the case of Thailand)

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### Abstract

This paper identified a complex behavioral model on consumer's organic decision making process. It studied the role of personal, economic and social elements in predicting Thai consumer's attitudes and purchase intentions toward organic food. Growing consumer concern for health and environment issues has resulted in increased attention towards organic food. Results shown that attitudes toward organic food can be explained by risk perception, trust in market agents, institution and subjective norms explain purchase intention. This has driven an increase in research, as marketers seek to understand the motivations behind organic purchases.

**Key-words** Consumer behavior, Thailand, purchase intention, Organic food

### Introduction

Consumers purchase organic food for reasons of health, environment and animal welfare (Nielsen, 2005). Sustainable agriculture can be defined as a way of production that causes less degradation of the agro-ecological system than conventional agriculture (Quenum, 2010). Organic farming has been identified as a production system that combines the best environmental practices and the application of high-animal welfare standards, as well as prohibiting the use of synthetic agrochemicals, drugs and hormones and restricting the use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides.

The potential development of organic agriculture and food in Thai market is still very large. The current situation that domestic demand growth is lower than supply, can be explained by the existence of very high prices of organic food and export orientation of the Thailand producers. A specific survey was developed. A specific survey was developed by 327 consumers, and conducted in Bangkok, Thailand.

### Literature review

The organic food products tastes better than conventional produced foods, concerns about health and nutrition, environmental concerns, concerns over the use of chemicals and pesticides in conventional farming, the erosion of confidence in factory and concerns over animal welfare (Squires et al. 2001). Magistris et al. (2008) noticed that health consciousness and subjective norms influence attitudes toward organic foods. In the same way, Tarkianen et al. (2006) observe that healthy diet, balanced life and organic knowledge are elements that influence individuals' attitudes toward organic food.

Briefly, it identify influential constructs in the decision making process concerning to the purchasing intention organic food such as environmental knowledge, subjective norms, rational choice, safety food, perceived behavioral control and purchase intention organic food.

#### Purchase Intention Organic Food (PIOF)

According to Essoussi and Zahaf (2008), the term "organic" is rooted in "bio" from Greek "bios" meaning life or way of living. Roddy, et al. (1994) view organic food products as a product of organic farming. Intention to buy may be defined as the commitment to carry one (Ramayah et al. 2010). The studies of past research found that the intention to purchase can measure the actual behavior of consumers. Consumers who are willing to buy highly would be willing to pay high in this context, the intention to purchase means interests and not the interests of consumers against products, so this bring the results to the actual behavior of consumers or making a decision to buy (Chan & Lau, 2000)

Subjective Norms (SN)

The influence caused by groups of people in society or people who close to consumers. Which may amplify the factors that influence on the people around them or people who are belief that he should do behaviors. (Bearden, et al.1989). The findings of some studies involving subjective norm variable showed that subjective norm does not affect the consumer's intention to buy organic food (Magnuson, et al., 2001). However, the result of Chang's (1998) study indicated that subjective norm has significant relationship to the intention to buy organic food. The first hypotheses can be formulated as follows:

H1: Subjective norm has positive effect on purchase intention organic food

Perceived Behavioral Control (PBC)

Perceived behavioral control has been found to be a strong predictor of behavioral intentions in earlier studies. Bogers et al. (2004) found that perceived behavioral control was the strongest predictor of intention to consume fruits and vegetables among Dutch consumers. Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) model and found that perceived behavioral control is a stronger predictor of these intentions than subjective norms and a weaker predictor than attitude. The second hypotheses can be formulated as follows:

H2: Perceived behavioral control has positive effect on purchase intention organic food

Safety Food (SF)

According to Hammit and Williams (2006), consumers who choose to buy organic products, tend to believe that these products due to their composition are healthier and less dangerous. The survey, which interviewed about 3,000 students in Finland, it was confirmed that consumers chose to buy organic food because they think that the food is healthier than conventional products (Krystallis et al., 2006). Food security is crucial as consumers search for food without chemicals, genetically modified organisms (Michaelidou, Hassan, 2008). The third hypotheses can be formulated as follows:

H3: Safety has positive effect on purchase intention organic food

Environmental Knowledge (EK)

Consumers lack of knowledge, misunderstanding about the environment or not knowing about background information on the risks of arising human consumption natural resources limited. This is caused of degradation the environment (Aman, et al. 2012). Therefore knowledge is the best way to add attitude and understanding of the purchasing organic food to the consumer. The fourth hypotheses can be formulated as follows:

H4: Environmental Knowledge has positive effect on purchase intention organic food

Rational Choice (RC)

For many, purchasing food is a routine that may or may not require a lot of thought. People buy food because they need to eat and feed their families. Things like flavor, appearance and ease of preparation may all be considered when purchasing food (Arvola et al., 2008). Nevertheless, there is a consensus that knowledge is a key construct in information processing and thus in the consumer decision-making process. The fifth hypotheses can be formulated as follows:

H5: Rational Choice has positive effect on purchase intention organic food

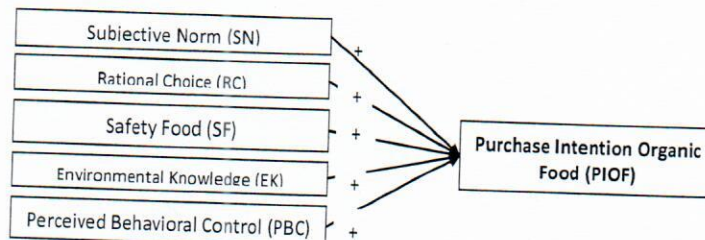


Fig. 1: Theoretical model. Source: Research results by author

## Methodology

### Data screening and analysis

The main objective of this study is measuring purchase intention organic food. Theoretical models have five independent concept measured by 23 observed concepts and one dependent concept measured by 03 observed concept. The independent variables are environmental knowledge, rational choice, subjective norms, safety food, perceived behavioral control and purchase intention organic food is a dependent variable. Most of the questionnaire was made using a 7-point Likert scale where point corresponds to the value - strongly disagree, and point 7 - strongly agree. Some general questions about the user's demographic characteristics, such as gender, age, occupation and monthly expenses.

The study is preliminarily assessed by Cronbach's Alpha coefficients for each component. Selection criteria are satisfied when concepts have correlation coefficients turn-total ( $>0.30$ ), Cronbach's alpha coefficients  $> 0.60$ ; system load factor  $>0.40$ ; total variance extracted for  $\geq 50\%$  (Hair & CTG, 1998). A sample of 327 customers was drawn, using the systematic sampling method. Finally there are 302 valid samples were analyzed. The structural equation modeling analysis by AMOS 22.0.

### Demographic profile of the respondents

Total 327 sampled surveys, there are 201 women, representing 61.47% and 126 men, representing 38.53%. 81.7% of the already purchased organic products, 4.2% of them did not, and 14.1% did not remember of doing so or did not know what an organic product is. The largest respondents consists of consumers from 18 to 25 years of age - 104 respondents, or 31.8% of all study participants, and consumers falling into the 26-30 age category - 122 respondents (37.2%).

After excluding the eight concepts, the EFA results 5 factors of behaviour scale. As KMO coefficient = 0.864, EFA matches the data and the statistical test Chi-square Bertlett 3107.712, p. 0.000 significance level. The variance extracted by 69.172 shows that factors derived from 69.172% explained variance of the data, Eigen values in the system by 1.201. Therefore, the scale draw is acceptable

### Confirming factor analysis (CFA)

The correlation coefficient between the components with accompanying standard deviation (Table 1) shows us these coefficients less than 0.05. Therefore, the components: safety food, rational choice, environmental knowledge, perceived behaviour control and subjective norms are worth distinguishing.

Table 1: Results of testing the value of distinguishing between the components of the scale.  
Source: Data analysis of research data by SPSS 22.0

| Correlation                  | R    | S.E. | C.R.  | P-value |
|------------------------------|------|------|-------|---------|
| Safety <--> Rational         | .883 | .135 | 6.526 | ***     |
| Safety <--> Subjective       | .695 | .115 | 6.057 | ***     |
| Safety <--> Perceived        | .709 | .130 | 5.459 | ***     |
| Safety <--> Enviromental     | .868 | .138 | 6.293 | ***     |
| Rational <--> Subjective     | .560 | .112 | 5.016 | ***     |
| Rational <--> Perceived      | .658 | .130 | 5.055 | ***     |
| Rational <--> Enviromental   | .831 | .142 | 5.858 | ***     |
| Subjective <--> Perceived    | .472 | .117 | 4.030 | ***     |
| Subjective <--> Enviromental | .661 | .124 | 5.335 | ***     |
| Perceived <--> Enviromental  | .672 | .140 | 4.810 | ***     |

Regarding the relevance general, linear structural analysis shows this valuable model chi-squared statistic is 166.166 with 67 degrees of freedom and the value of  $p = 0.000$ . Chi-squared relative degrees of freedom according  $Cmin/df$  was 2.480 ( $< 3$ ). Other indicators such as  $GFI = 0.919$  ( $> 0.9$ ),  $TLI = 0.921$  ( $> 0.9$ ),  $CFI = 0.942$  ( $> 0.9$ ) and  $RMSEA = 0.076$  ( $< 0.08$ ). Therefore, this model fit the data was collected.

Table 2: Results of the AMOS Analyses of the Resultant Models.  
Source: Data analysis of research data by SPSS 22.0

| Model                         | Goodness of fit Measures |    |       |                    |       |      |      |      |      |      |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------|----|-------|--------------------|-------|------|------|------|------|------|
|                               | X2                       | Df | p     | X2/df<br>(CMIN/DF) | RMSEA | NFI  | RFI  | IFI  | TLI  | CFI  |
| Sample<br>.946                | 120.539                  | 47 | 0.000 | 2.565              | .078  | .915 | .926 | .947 | .924 | .924 |
| Criteria<br>(non-significant) | P>.05                    | ≥0 | -     | 2 to 3             | <.08  | >.90 | >.90 | >.90 | >.90 | >.90 |

Note: X2 = hi-square test, df = Degrees of freedom, RMSEA = Root mean square error of approximation, NFI = Normed Fit Index, RFI = Relative Fit Index, IFI = Incremental Fit Index, TLI = Tucker-Lewis Index, CFI = Comparative Fit Index.

Table 3: Results of estimating causal relationships between these factors green purchase intention.  
Source: Data analysis of research data by SPSS AMOS 22.0

| Relations                | Estimate | S.E. | C.R.  | P    | Label |
|--------------------------|----------|------|-------|------|-------|
| Intention <--- Safety    | .237     | .110 | 2.152 | .031 | Yes   |
| Intention <--- Rational  | .342     | .118 | 2.894 | .004 | Yes   |
| Intention <--- Perceived | .463     | .074 | 6.278 | ***  | Yes   |

The results showed that the model last calibration value chi-squared statistic is 120.539 with 47 degrees of freedom (p = 0.016). Chi-squared relative degrees of freedom according Cmin/df was 2.565 (<3). Other indicators such as GFI = 0.930 (> 0.9), TLI = 0.924 (> 0.9), CFI = 0.946 (> 0.9) and RMSEA = 0.078 (<0.08). Therefore, this model achieved compatibility with data already collected.

Testing the reliability of estimates by Bootstrap

Bootstrap method used to test the model estimates the last model with the pattern repeat is N = 1000. The estimation results from 1000 samples are averaged together with the deviations are presented in Table 4, CR very small absolute value than 2, it can be said that the deviation is very small; while not statistically significant at the 95% confidence level. Thus, we can conclude that the model estimates can be trusted.

Table 4: Results estimated by bootstrap with N = 1000. Source: Data analysis of research data by SPSS AMOS 22.0

| Parameter                | Estimate | SE    | Estimate standard |       | Estimate Bootstrap with N=1000 |         |        |
|--------------------------|----------|-------|-------------------|-------|--------------------------------|---------|--------|
|                          |          |       | SE-SE             | Mean  | Bias                           | SE-Bias | CR     |
| Intention <--- Safety    | 0.237    | 0.146 | 0.003             | 0.234 | -0.003                         | 0.005   | -0.600 |
| Intention <--- Rational  | 0.342    | 0.153 | 0.003             | 0.349 | 0.007                          | 0.005   | 1.400  |
| Intention <--- Perceived | 0.463    | 0.082 | 0.002             | 0.453 | -0.01                          | 0.003   | -3.333 |

### Conclusions

When consumer decided whether to buy organic food products or not, it clearly involved a complex set of factors that cannot easily be interpreted. In Thailand, the organic food is considered at the introductory stage where not many people are aware about it. Consumers have the knowledge on factors that contributes to sustainable environment, due to convenience feeling of their current consumption pattern but it will not change their perception towards organic food products.

Overall, it could be concluded that even though all predictors variable influenced the purchase intention organic food but only three variables independently had the significant influence, they were:

- (1) Safety food,
- (2) Perceived behaviour control,
- (3) Rational choice

The limitation of our research is that the sample was restricted to a single geographic area in Thailand. Further research should be used a much larger sample in a different national setting to validate the findings

of this study.

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