

# ACCESSING THE CONSUMERS' PURCHASE INTENTION TOWARDS ORGANIC FOOD : EXPLORING THE ATTITUDE AMONG BHUTANESE CONSUMERS

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**Abstract :** The purpose of this research is to examine the relationship between selected factors namely organic knowledge, attitude towards organic food, motivation, health consciousness, subjective norms, price and purchase intention of Bhutanese consumers for organic food. This research will help develop better marketing strategies for all the organic food producers and manufacturers based on consumer preference and their behavior.

## INTRODUCTION :

Organic farming practice is not a new concept to Bhutanese farmers but while the term "organic" is, given its terrain and lack of access to chemical fertilizers, Bhutan is often known to be "organic by default." Bhutanese consumers are today indifferent towards organic food because of lack of awareness and price of organic products. The former agriculture minister (Dr) Pema Gyamtsho stated that Bhutan would be 100 percent organic by 2020, making headlines across the globe on how a landlocked country that has only eight percent arable land is going organic. Work has begun and a logo for organic products developed called "Bhutan Natural." But outside Bhutan, organic agriculture is considered as one of the most rapidly growing sectors of the global food industry.

## STATEMENT OF PROBLEM :

In Bhutan, there are many people who do not clearly understand about organic food and its benefits towards one's health. Organic knowledge plays a very vital role regarding its purchase. Healthy food consumption along with purchasing knowledge about the food will play a very important role in guiding Bhutanese consumers towards a positive attitude with a positive intention to purchase organically grown food.

## RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND HYPOTHESES :

The objective of this research is to determine the attitude of customers for their intention towards purchasing organic foods. The researcher mainly emphasizes on the factors which would lead to determining whether or not a positive attitude for organic product and will help in the customers purchase intentions. The specific hypotheses tested in this study are as follows (see Figure 1):

H10: There is no significant relationship between organic knowledge and motivation

H1a: There is a significant relationship between organic knowledge and motivation

H20: There is no significant relationship between organic knowledge and attitude towards organic food

H2a: There is a significant relationship between organic knowledge and attitude towards

H30: There is no significant relationship between health consciousness and attitude towards organic food

H3a: There is a significant relationship between health consciousness and attitude towards organic food

H40: There is no significant relationship between subjective norms and attitude towards organic food

H4a: There is a significant relationship between subjective norms and attitude towards organic food

H50: There is no significant relationship between attitude towards organic food and intention to purchase organic food

H5a: There is a significant relationship between attitude towards organic food and intention to purchase organic food

H60: There is no significant relationship between motivation and intention to purchase organic foods

H6a: There is a significant relationship between motivation and intention to purchase organic foods

H70: There is no significant relationship between subjective norms and intention to purchase organic foods

H7a: There is a significant relationship between subjective norms and intention to purchase organic foods

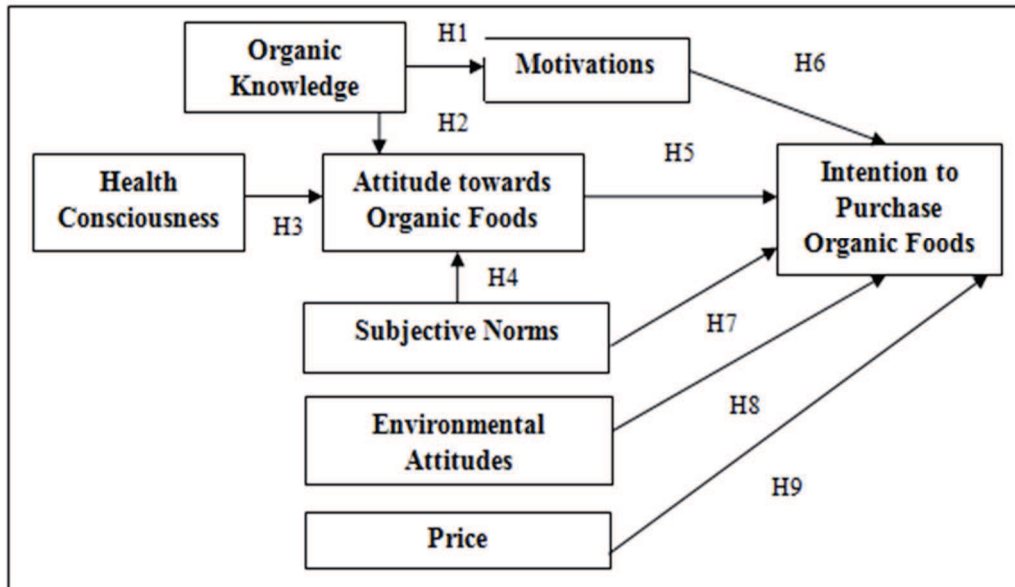
H80: There is no significant relationship between environmental attitudes and intention to purchase organic foods

H8a: There is a significant relationship between environmental attitudes and intention to purchase organic foods

H9o: There is no significant relationship between price and intention to purchase organic foods

H9a: There is a significant relationship between price and intention to purchase organic foods

**Figure 1: The modified conceptual framework for purchase intention of organic food**



**SCOPE OF RESEARCH :**

In this study, the intention to purchase represents the dependent variable, while the independent variables are represented by organic knowledge, motivation, attitude towards organic food, subjective norms, environmental attitudes and price. The target population for this research is the Bhutanese consumers both male and female with an age limit of at least 23 years old who do not have any experience in buying organic food. The researcher decided to select Thimphu district as the main area and focuses only on working people with a qualification of higher secondary school.

**SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY :**

The researcher hopes that from this research and its findings, it could help the National organic programme and the ministry of agriculture to understand the potential factors that affect the Bhutanese consumers' attitude in purchasing organic food and the findings can

be used in educational programs and enhance the knowledge of students (who might be potential customers in the time to come) .

**RESEARCH DESIGN, DATA COLLECTION AND MEASURES :**

The sample consisted of 400 Bhutanese consumers in Thimphu, Bhutan and the data was collected during weekdays and weekends in Thimphu Centenary Farmers market. The sampling method used was convenience sampling, which is the method that allows the researcher to obtain people or units that are most conveniently available (Zikmund, 2003).

The questionnaire for this study has been developed using various previous studies incorporating all the potential components of the conceptual framework. The responses for all the factors were collected with a five-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree". In order to check the interval consistency of the measure, the Cronbach's alphas exceeded 0.60.

**Table 1:** The reliability Analysis scale

No of Cases	Variables	Cronbach's Alpha
400	Organic Knowledge	0.706
400	Motivation	0.800
400	Health consciousness	0.804
400	Attitude towards organic foods	0.832
400	Subjective Norms	0.801
400	Environmental Attitudes	0.748
400	Price	0.806
400	Purchase Intentions	0.676

**RESULTS :**

In the study, the researcher tested the relationship between independent and dependent variables by using the Pearson's Correlation Coefficient

Table 2, shows that the majority of Bhutanese customers who participated in this research are male with 215 people

(53.8%). The second factor age showed that the majority of 286 customers (71.5%) were between the age of 24-29. For educational level the research showed that the highest percentage of respondents had bachelor's degrees at (70.8%) with 286 respondents and the lastly under income level, there was a majority of 133 respondents (33.3%) who had a monthly income ranging from US\$ 175-239.

**Table 2:** Summary of Demographic factors

Demographic Factors	Majority group of Respondents	Percentage of total Respondents
Gender	Male	53.8 %
Age	24-29	71.5%
Educational Level	Bachelors Degree	70.8%
Income	US\$ 175-239	33.3 %

**DISCUSSION :**

An analysis of the information collected concludes that most customers who have the intention to buy organic food are young, college graduates who have just started their career and earning a graduate's salary. Knowledge of organic food helps consumers to have a positive attitude towards organic food (Von Alvesleben, 1997), thus influencing consumers' attitude to buy or not to buy organic food. Based on the results, the study showed that there is a very strong positive relationship and strong positive relationship between organic knowledge and motivation (0.824); followed by the relationship between organic knowledge and attitude towards organic food (0.711); relationship between attitude towards organic food and intention to purchase organic food (0.655); relationship between subjective norms and attitude towards organic food (0.531); relationship between

subjective norms and intention to purchase organic food (0.496); relationship between health consciousness and attitude towards organic food (0.452); relationship between environmental attitude and intention to purchase organic food (0.434); relationship between motivation and intention to purchase organic food (0.426) and the relationship between price and intention to purchase organic food (0.402). Thus, it can be concluded that there is significant relationship between all these potential factors.

**RECOMMENDATIONS :**

Increase investment in the promotion of organic food market to boost the sales and the purchase intention of the Bhutanese consumers. This will help create awareness and also increase the knowledge of general consumers about the consumption of organic food. Raise awareness

campaigns assuring consumers that they can make a difference to their health and environment by consuming organically grown food. The external factors (family and friends) plays a huge role in influencing the behavior of Bhutanese consumers to purchase organic food, thus, marketers should take into consideration the word-of-mouth technique to deliver the message on the consumption of organic food. It is also very important for the marketers and producers of organic food to advertise their food as eco-friendly.

#### LIMITATION AND FUTURE RESEARCH :

The researcher selected only one city in Bhutan for this study, Thimphu city. The researcher included only some factors referred from the previous studies and it does not emphasize on one particular food or product. The findings might have many shortcomings and further research may also be necessary. The future studies can also focus on a particular organic food or product. It would also be very interesting to know what really motivates the Bhutanese consumers to purchase organic food and what demotivates them. A further study on the motivational factors regarding their attitude towards organic food is highly recommended. A research on the purchase behavior of Bhutanese consumers for organic food can be carried out accordingly.

**CONCLUSIONS :** The respondents in this research showed that organic knowledge played a very important role in influencing the motivation to purchase organic food. There should be more campaigns in and around the city to highlight the importance and benefits of consuming organic food. The role of subjective norm also had a huge impact in influencing the attitude of Bhutanese consumers to purchase organic food.

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