

Buying Behaviour of Organic Food Consumers

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Abstract

The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) offers a powerful lens for understanding what drives people to choose organic food. It highlights how personal attitudes, social influences, and a sense of control over the decision all play a role in shaping buying behavior while environmental concern, price and unique qualities of organic foods, and health consciousness all play a major role in switching consumers into organic food consumption. To gain meaningful insights into key factors shaping consumers' intentions to purchase organic food, a cross-sectional survey involving 120 organic food consumers in the Colombo District was conducted using a convenience sampling approach. In identifying patterns and relationships that influence purchasing decisions, gathered data were analyzed through Pearson Correlation and Multiple Linear Regression techniques. The study finds that several psychological and product-related factors play a crucial role in shaping consumers' intentions to purchase organic food. Specifically, personal attitudes, social influences (subjective norms), a sense of control over the decision, and the inherent qualities of organic food significantly drive purchasing intentions. However, considerations such as health consciousness, environmental concerns, and price of organic food did not show a meaningful impact on consumers' decisions to buy organic products.

Keywords: *Organic food consumption, Intention to purchase organic foods, Theory of planned behaviour*

Keywords: *institutional pressure, moderating effects, sustainable supply chain management practices, triple bottom line performance*

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Introduction

Avoiding synthetic chemicals, promoting soil health, and respecting natural ecosystems, organic foods are produced using eco-friendly farming practices ensuring both the quality of the final product and the sustainability of the cultivation process (Chinnici et al., 2002; Gundala & Singh, 2021). The consumption of organic food, produced without pesticides, synthetic fertilizers, and minimal processing, has gained significant traction globally (Eyinade et al., 2021; Malkanthi, 2021). Consumers prioritize health benefits, perceiving organic food as safer, more nutritious, and a sustainable alternative compared to conventional options (Jakubowska et al., 2024; Gundala & Singh, 2021). With increasing consumer awareness of dietary choices, a premium is willingly paid for organically produced foods (Shenoy et al., 2024). This trend has significantly expanded the organic food market. In 2023, the global organic food and beverage market reached an impressive market value of USD 231.52 billion, reflecting its strong consumer demand for healthier and more sustainable choices. As awareness of nutrition, environmental impact, and ethical farming continues to rise, the industry is set for rapid expansion. From 2024 to 2030, it is projected to grow at an annual rate of 13.9%, signaling a strong shift toward organic consumption worldwide (Grand View Research, 2024). Driven by rapid population and economic growth, the Asian region has emerged as a key player in organic food production and export (Sheng et al., 2009).

Showing the commitment for sustainable tea cultivation and eco-friendly farming, Sri Lanka made a historical achievement in 1983 by establishing the world's first organic tea estate in Haldummulla area (Kodagoda & Dharmadasa, 2020). Organic agriculture in Sri Lanka remains limited despite government efforts to conduct training programs for farmers. These initiatives have not fully succeeded due to various

challenges, and farmers continue to increase their use of agrochemicals (Malkanthi, 2021). In 2018, extent of organic agricultural land in Sri Lanka totaled 77,169 hectares, a decrease of 19,149 hectares from 2017 (Silva & Rajapakse, 2023).

Organic food purchases and consumption contribute to sustainable behavior. This behavior reflects both their social-environmental responsibility and personal preference (Nguyen et al., 2019). The COVID-19 pandemic has reshaped the way people think about food with a growing emphasis on health-conscious choices. As people became more mindful of their well-being, more consumers turned to organic products, seeking natural, chemical-free options that align with a healthier lifestyle. This trend highlights how global health crises can reshape purchasing behaviors, driving more consumers toward organic options (Vapa et al., 2022). Although the demand for organic food in Sri Lanka is growing, regular purchases remain low (Bandara, 2019), and consumers view the value of organic food differently, leading many to hesitate and delay their purchasing decisions (Kapuge, 2016). Stakeholders in the sector have been keen on uncovering the factors that influence consumer decisions when choosing organic products (Secer, 2023). However, research on the behavioral influences behind organic food purchases in Sri Lanka remains scarce with only a few studies delving into the psychological and social factors shaping consumer preferences in the country (Priyanath & Dangalla, 2022; Kapuge, 2016; Bandara, 2019).

Recognizing the gaps in existing theories and practices, this research seeks to bridge them by examining the factors that shape consumer purchase intentions for organic food in the Colombo District. As Sri Lanka's most densely populated urban center, Colombo offers a diverse and dynamic consumer base, making it an ideal setting for this study. Urban residents, with greater exposure to organic food, may hold distinct perspectives



compared to those in rural areas, highlighting the need for a deeper understanding of their purchasing behaviors. As the commercial capital, Colombo houses consumers with relatively higher incomes, which can influence their ability to afford premium products like organic food. It has a larger presence of organic food stores, farmers' markets, and supermarket chains that offer organic options, making it an ideal location for studying actual purchase behavior while the district is known for having more informed consumers, thanks to better access to media and education. This makes it possible to study how awareness impacts purchase intentions. It also has a mix of cultural, ethnic, and age groups, enabling a richer analysis of the factors influencing consumer behavior across various segments.

Literature Review

According to USDA (2008) and Nguyen et al. (2019), synthetic fertilizers, pesticides, growth hormones, irradiation, antibiotics, or sewer-sludge fertilizers are not used in cultivation of crops organically to ensure a more natural and environmentally friendly approach to food production. Research on organic food has extensively explored the personal factors that affect consumer attitudes and purchasing behavior. These factors include individual values, awareness on environmental issues when cultivating crops traditionally, knowledge on organically produced crops, perceived quality, emotions of the individuals towards those foods, health consciousness, nutritional concerns, food taste, better sensory qualities and overall food quality (Priyanath & Dangalla, 2022; Kapuge, 2016; Bandara, 2019; Nguyen et al., 2019; Khan et al., 2022; Khan et al., 2022). These perceptions collectively contribute to a positive consumer attitude toward purchasing organic products, reinforcing the growing preference for organic choices (Marozzo et al., 2023).

Consumer attitudes and purchasing behavior in purchasing and consuming organic food have been widely studied, revealing a complex

mix of psychological, social, and economic influences. Several key factors have emerged as significant drivers of purchase intentions.

According to Boobalan et al. (2022) and Khan et al. (2022), attitudes, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, response efficacy, and self-expressive benefits in shaping consumer decisions. These findings imply that purchasing organic food is a rational choice made by consumers. On the other hand the purchase decision is also influenced by social validation, personal identity, and the perceived ability to make a meaningful impact.

Through a study conducted in India, Singh & Verma (2017) revealed that health consciousness, knowledge, price, subjective norms, and availability play crucial role in organic food consumption underscoring the fact that accessibility and affordability are key determinants alongside individual awareness and social pressures. Similarly, Basha & Lal (2019) found that environmental concerns, social norms, safety, trust, and convenience shape consumer intentions on organic food purchase, highlighting the role of ethical and practical considerations in organic food purchases.

With a limited availability of studies related to organic food consumption in Sri Lanka, Premadasa & Fernando (2022) observed that health consciousness and environmental concerns are primary motivators in this regard. This suggests that Sri Lankan consumers may prioritize organic food for its perceived health benefits and sustainability, reinforcing broader global trends toward mindful consumption.

Overall, these studies provide valuable insights into the diverse factors that drive organic food purchasing decisions across different consumer groups. While motivations may vary based on geographical and cultural contexts, there is a clear intersection between individual awareness, social influences, ethical considerations, and practical accessibility. Further research could explore how these factors interact in evolving



consumer markets and whether emerging trends, such as digital retail and sustainability certifications, impact purchasing behavior.

Zanoli et al. (2004) found that highly educated consumers tend to have a deeper understanding of organic products, making them more inclined to purchase them while Solomon (2006) found that wealth distribution plays a key role in determining consumers' purchasing power and the overall market potential of a targeted demographic.

Theoretical model

One of the most widely applied models for understanding consumer behavior is The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB). It posits that individuals exercise control over their socially relevant behaviors, with their intentions to serve as a key predictor of actual behavior (Bandara, 2019; Priyanath & Dangalla, 2022). TPB has been extensively utilized in food choice studies, helping researchers model consumer behavior in organic food markets also (Khan et al., 2022; Dean et al., 2008). Consumer purchase decisions are driven by the psychological and motivational factors. By conceptualizing, measuring, and identifying behavioral influences, TPB provides a structured framework for examining that drive consumer decisions. In a study conducted by Wong & Aini (2017), standard TPB model has been expanded by integrating organic food choice motives—such as food safety, health consciousness, price sensitivity, and organic food characteristics—to gain deeper insights into purchasing behavior. In the context of organic food, Fishbein & Ajzen (1975) define purchase intention as an individual's perceived likelihood of engaging in a specific action as purchase intention serves as the cognitive representation of a consumer's readiness to make an organic food purchase (Ahmed et al., 2020). Teixeira et al. (2021) highlight that intention is considered the immediate antecedent of actual behavior, making it a crucial factor in predicting organic food consumption patterns. Overall, The Theory of Planned

Behavior (TPB) has been an invaluable tool in understanding and explaining why consumers choose organic food. It breaks down the psychological and social influences—such as personal attitudes, societal expectations, and a sense of control—that shape purchasing decisions. While TPB effectively explains behavioral intentions, researchers have expanded the model to include additional factors like health consciousness and environmental concerns, making it even more relevant to organic food studies. As consumer preferences continue to evolve, future research can refine TPB by integrating sustainability trends, shifting market dynamics, and the growing demand for ethically sourced products, ensuring it remains a valuable framework for understanding modern food choices. However, limited studies were conducted in Sri Lanka by considering organic food purchase.

Dependent Variable

Purchase intention

Intentions are described as an individual's expected likelihood of performing a specific action (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). Within the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), purchase intention for organic food is understood as a clear sign of a person's readiness to engage in the behavior (Ahmed et al., 2020). It serves as the direct precursor to actual purchasing decisions, making it a key factor in predicting consumer behavior (Teixeira et al., 2021).

Independent variables

Attitude

When it comes to organic food, consumer attitudes are influenced by their beliefs about its many benefits, including its positive impact on health, eco-friendly farming methods, and enhanced flavor (Thøgersen, 2009; Zanoli & Naspetti, 2002). These beliefs contribute to forming an overall positive or negative attitude toward organic food, which in turn influences purchasing



decisions (Bandara, 2019; Teixeira et al., 2021). Tsen et al. (2006) highlight that consumer attitude plays a crucial role in determining who is willing to pay for organic products. People's perceptions and beliefs about organic food—whether related to health benefits, environmental impact, or quality—strongly influence their purchasing intentions, shaping the market demand for organic options. Research has consistently shown that consumer attitudes play a key role in shaping purchase intentions. Several studies (Bandara, 2019; Teixeira et al., 2021; Weerasiri & Cooray, 2016) highlight how pre-purchase attitudes positively influence the likelihood of buying organic products. Building on this existing literature, the following hypothesis has been developed to further explore this relationship.

Hypothesis 1: Attitude plays a significant role in shaping purchase intentions toward organic foods.

Subjective norm

Subjective norm reflects the social pressure individuals feel when deciding whether to adopt a particular behavior (Ajzen, 1991). When people believe that their family, friends, or social circles expect them to consume organic food, they are more likely to do so. Similarly, some individuals choose organic products to align themselves with those who prioritize sustainable and health-conscious lifestyles (Chen, 2007). However, if they perceive that influential figures in their lives view organic food negatively, their willingness to purchase it may decline. Dean et al. (2012) also emphasize that subjective norm plays a vital role in shaping consumers' intentions to buy organic food. Given its significant impact, the following hypothesis has been developed to explore this relationship further.

Hypothesis 2: Subjective norms significantly affect purchase intentions toward organic foods.

Perceived behavioural control

Perceived behavioral control reflects how confident an individual feels about their ability to carry out a certain action, based on how easy or difficult they believe it to be (Ajzen, 2002). The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) highlights this factor as an important influence on decision-making, recognizing that people don't always have a clear picture of the resources and opportunities available to them (Kumara, 2019; Secer, 2023). This uncertainty can shape whether someone follows through with a particular behavior, making perceived behavioral control a key element in understanding consumer choices. Olsen (2004) identified self-efficacy and convenience as key factors influencing food purchasing. Perceived behavioural control is considered as a main latent variable that influences the selection of organic menus (Ahmed et al., 2020). Consequently, the following hypothesis was developed.

Hypothesis 3: Perceived behavioral control has a significant influence on purchase intentions toward organic foods.

Environmental concern

Environmental concern significantly motivates consumption of organic food. Amyx et al. (1994) found that consumers' ecological concern influences their intention to buy organic products. Increased environmental awareness strongly influences a person's decision to purchase organic food (Secer, 2023). Environmental concerns have consistently been identified as a key factor shaping consumers' purchasing decisions in various studies (Teixeira et al., 2021; Torjusen et al., 2001; Saleki & Seyedsaleki, 2012). Thus, the following hypothesis was developed.

Hypothesis 4: Consumers' awareness of environmental issues plays a crucial role in shaping their decision to purchase organic foods, as they seek products that align with sustainable and eco-friendly values.

Price



Price significantly influences consumers' buying behavior of organic food (Ahmed et al., 2020). Studies indicate that consumers perceive organic food as expensive compared to conventional foods, limiting its actual purchase (Ferreira & Pereira, 2023; Khan et al., 2022). This price sensitivity creates a gap between intention and behavior, as the financial constraint outweighs consumers' preference for organic products (Khan et al., 2022). Regular consumers view higher prices as less of a barrier compared to occasional consumers (Zanoli & Naspetti, 2002). Accordingly, the following hypothesis was developed.

Hypothesis 5: Price significantly influences purchase intentions toward organic foods.

Characteristics of Organic food

Food products are typically complex combinations of characteristics described by sensory properties such as taste, smell, and appearance (Vapa et al., 2022). These properties influence consumer experiences and choices. A study by Krystallis & Arvnitoyannis (2006) found that the organic quality of food is a major predictor of purchasing intentions among Japanese consumers. Many organic food consumers believe organic foods taste more natural, intense, and flavorful (Khan et al., 2022). If an organic product looks unsatisfactory, consumers may feel deceived, perceive it as low quality, and be unwilling to pay more (Zanoli et al., 2004). Organic foods provide

numerous advantages, from health benefits to environmental sustainability and higher nutritional value compared to conventional options. However, taste continues to be the most influential factor in consumer decisions when choosing organic products (Shafie & Rennie, 2012). Based on this insight, the following hypothesis has been developed to further explore this relationship.

Hypothesis 6: The distinct qualities of organic food, such as its health benefits, environmental sustainability, and superior taste, significantly influence consumers' willingness to purchase organic products.

Health consciousness

Consumers who prioritize health and embrace a healthy lifestyle are more likely to prefer organic food, driven by its natural benefits and nutritional value (Ferreira & Pereira, 2023; Khan et al., 2022; Shenoy et al., 2024; Chakrabarti, 2010). Research by Musdiana et al. (2010) further confirms that health consciousness plays a significant role in shaping consumers' intentions to purchase organic foods. Based on these insights, the following hypothesis has been developed to explore this relationship further.

Hypothesis 7: Consumers who are mindful of their health are more likely to choose organic foods, as they associate them with better nutrition and overall well-being

Table 01 illustrates the sources of construct measurement that were adapted from few pieces of literature.

Table 01: Origin of variables

Variable	Adapted from
Purchase intention	Ahmed et al., 2020
Attitude	Wong & Aini (2017), Bandara, (2019)
Subjective norm	Wong & Aini (2017), Teixeira et al., 2021
Environmental concern	Maichum et al., (2016)
Price	Wong & Aini (2017)
Organic food characteristics	Wong & Aini (2017)
Health concern	Wong & Aini (2017)

Methods

To collect data, this study employed a convenience sampling method, despite the inherent limitations of non-probability sampling, which may affect generalizability. Convenience sampling was chosen for several reasons. First, scholars such as Sekaran & Bougie (2010) and Malhotra (2010) have noted that it is a suitable approach when a sampling frame is unavailable or when time and resource constraints exist. Moreover, previous studies in this domain have successfully utilized this method (Thambiah et al., 2015; Do Paco & Raposo, 2009; Eze & Ndubisi, 2013). Second, the large and dispersed population made random sampling impractical. Third, the lack of an available sampling frame

further supported the use of convenience sampling.

Data was collected by administering questionnaires to customers in eight supermarkets known for their organic food offerings. These supermarkets were specifically chosen based on their organic product availability. Following the recommendation of Saiful (2011), who suggested that an applicable sample size ranges from 30 to 500 respondents, the first 15 customers exiting each supermarket were invited to participate, resulting in a final sample size of 120 organic food consumers.

Table 02, detailed the selected supermarkets, their locations, and the number of respondents from each location.

Table 02: Selected Locations

Super market	Location	Number of Respondents
A	Kalubowila	15
	Dehiwala	15
	Union place	15
	Liberty plaza	15
B	Ratmalana	15
	Union place	15
	Nugegoda	15
	Rajagiriya	15

Data for the study were collected by distributing a questionnaire among the respondents in weekends. The respondents coming out of each selected supermarkets from 4-6 p.m. were requested to fill the questionnaire if he/she was interested to participate in the study.

The questionnaire was prepared in English and consisted mainly of three parts. The first part consisted of questions regarding purchasing pattern of organic food such as frequency of purchasing, type of organic food purchased, place of purchase, attention on organic food labels, average monthly expenditure on organic foods and finally about the channels of information on organic food. Nominal and ordinal scale were used

to measure the respondents answer in this section.

The second section of the questionnaire focused on key factors influencing consumer behavior, covering seven independent variables and one dependent variable. The dependent variable examined was the intention to purchase organic food.

Three of the independent variables were derived from the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB)—these included attitude toward organic food, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control, which help explain the psychological drivers behind consumer decisions. In addition, four other independent variables related to organic food choice

motives were considered: environmental concern, price sensitivity, organic food characteristics, and health awareness. Together, these variables provided a comprehensive view of the factors shaping consumers' purchasing intentions. The questions related to attitude, subjective norm, perceived behavioral control, environmental concern, price, organic food characteristics health concern and purchase intention were included. 5-point Likert scale was used to measure the respondents' opinion on those factors by checking agreement with the given statements (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree).

The last part of the questionnaire consisted of questions related respondent's gender, age, marital status, number of children in the household, average monthly income, occupation, consumption behavior of organic foods, locality, ethnicity and lastly their education level.

The Table 03 shows the reliability coefficient (Cronbach's alpha) and the number of

statements adopted for each variable. Five statements were used to measure the purchase intention and the Cronbach's Alpha was calculated as 0.922 which indicates that the purchase intention has a very strong internal consistency. On the other hand, 4 statements were used to measure all predictors and the reliability coefficients were mostly over 0.8 [subjective norm (0.907), organic food characteristics (0.888), Price (0.832), and attitude (0.826)]. The reliability coefficients for health concern and environmental concern were 0.716 and 0.707 respectively. Further, the reliability coefficient for perceived behavioral (0.652) was questionable according to rules of thumb of Cronbach's alpha. However, it can be acceptable according to Hair et al. (2006) and Moss et al. (1998). Overall, the measurement scale items used in this study demonstrated strong internal consistency, confirming that the constructs were both reliable and cohesive in their assessment.

Table 03: Summary of Reliability analysis

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha	Number of statements
Purchase intention	0.902	5
Attitude	0.826	4
Subjective norm	0.907	4
Perceived behavioral control	0.652	4
Environmental concern	0.707	4
Price	0.832	4
Organic food characteristics	0.888	4
Health concern	0.716	4

Collected data were analyzed using mix method approach integrating both qualitative and quantitative techniques in understanding the research problem deeply and comprehensively as it allows researchers to validate findings, explore different perspectives, and uncover insights that a single method might miss. Therefore, we first analyzed the data descriptively to summarize

and provide simple graphic analysis of the demographic variables and purchasing behavior of organic food consumers. Second, we used Pearson Correlation and Multiple Regression Analysis in achieving the objective of determining the factors affecting the consumer's purchase intention toward organic food. In finding the determinants of

purchase intention, the following regression was estimated.

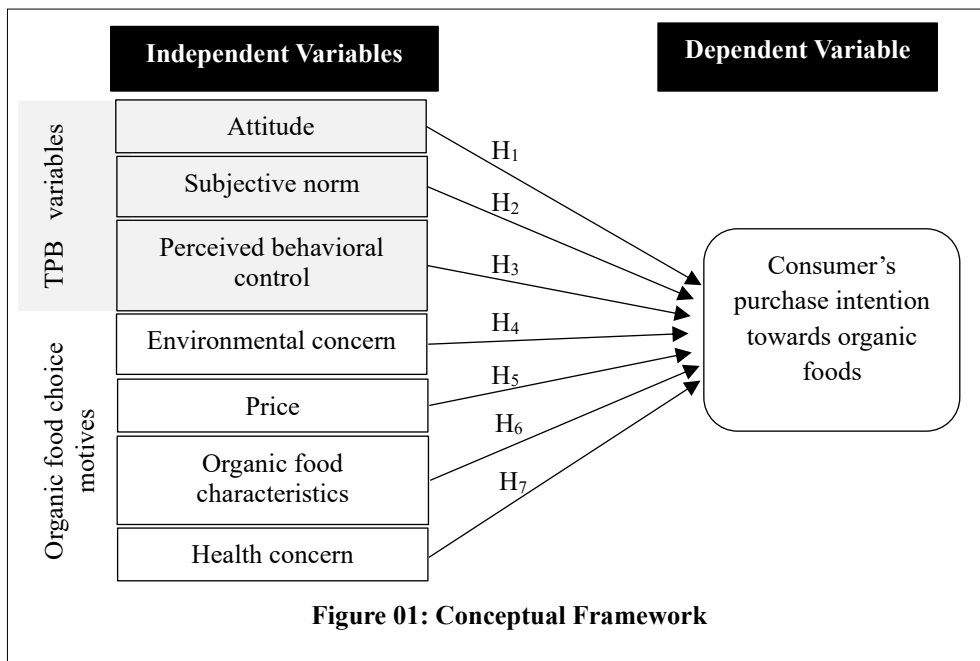
$$PI = \beta_0 + \beta_1 ATT + \beta_2 SN + \beta_3 PBC + \beta_4 EC + \beta_5 P + \beta_6 OFC + \beta_7 HC + \varepsilon \quad (1)$$

β_0 - intercept coefficient

$\beta_1, \beta_2, \beta_3, \beta_4, \beta_5, \beta_6, \beta_7$ - slope coefficients to be estimated

ε - Error term

Variable	Unit of Measurement
PI - Purchase intention toward organic food ATT - Attitude SN - Subjective Norm PBC - Perceived Behavioral Control EC - Environmental Concern P - Price OFC - Organic Food Characteristics HC -Health Concern	<i>Likert Scale</i>



Results and Discussions

Table 4 shows 54.17% of the sample are female. This could be because females playing the major role in purchasing decision of food in a household rather than males. On the other hand, women are more health conscious than men. Therefore, the tendency to consume more organic food may be higher. The majority, 30.83%, are aged 30-39, and 82.5% are married. Additionally, 28.3% have an income above Rs. 65,000. Regarding

education, 34.17% hold a degree, 19.17% a diploma, and 15% have completed GCE A/L, indicating that over half have higher education. Most respondents (30.83%) are professionals, such as doctors, engineers, lecturers, and managers. A significant portion, 69.17%, live in urban areas, and 70.83% of those consuming organic food have children. 84.17% of the sample are non-vegetarians.

Table 04: Sample profile

Demography	Characteristics	Percentage %
Gender	Male	45.83
	Female	54.17
Age	20- 29 Years	25.00
	30-39 Years	30.83
	40- 49 Years	20.00
	50-59 Years	19.17
	Above 60 Years	5.00
Civil Status	Single	17.50
	Married	82.50
Average monthly income	Below Rs.15,000	3.33
	Rs.15,000 – Rs.25,000	7.51
	Rs.25,000 – Rs.35,000	15.83
	Rs.35,000 – Rs.45,000	18.33
	Rs.45,000 – Rs.55,000	14.17
	Rs.55,000 – Rs.65,000	12.50
	Above Rs.65,000	28.33
Education level	No formal education	0.83
	Primary Education	3.33
	Pre-Secondary Education	5.01
	Up to GCE O/L	5.83
	Up to GCE A/L	15.00
	Certificate Level	10.83
	Diploma Level	19.17
	Degree Level	34.17
	Other	5.83
Occupation	Professional	30.83
	Clerical	16.67
	Business	21.67
	Housewife	15.00
	Labour	8.33
	Other	7.50
Locality	Rural	12.00
	Urban	18.30
	Semi-urban	69.70

Presence of children in the household	Yes	70.83
	No	29.17
Consumption behaviour	Vegetarian	15.83
	Non - vegetarian	84.17

Source: Surveyed Data

Buying behaviour of organic food consumers

Organic food purchasing frequency

Figure 02 results, over half of the respondents (58.33%) consume organic food weekly, 24.17% monthly, 7.5% every six months, and 10% seldom.

Type of organic food purchased

Figure (03) illustrates that the majority of the consumers purchase organically produced vegetables and fruits. Vegetables are favoured by 38.3% and fruits are favoured by 34.4% organic consumers respectively. And then organic raw materials like rice and flour etc. are consumed by 16.31% next to vegetables and fruits. Besides processed organic foods like cordial, jam etc. and organic herbs and spices are consumed only by very few consumers.

In order to establish the preferred shopping places for organic food, respondents were asked to choose the place where they usually shop for organic food. (figure 04) Supermarket was the main organic food purchasing place (41.04 %), followed by other like grown at home etc. (23.58%), markets (20.28%), Organic retail stores (10.85%), and finally groceries (4.245%) respectively.

Attention on organic food labels

Figure 05 shows, majority of the respondents (35.83%) pay attention usually and 26.67% of respondents always pay attention to the food labels. Where else 16.67% of respondents often pay attention to the food labels, 15.83% seldom pay attention to the food labels and 5% of the respondents never pay attention to the food labels.

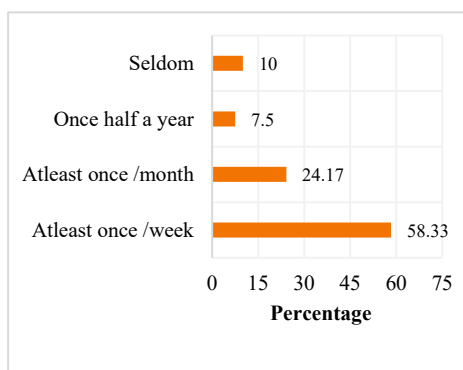


Figure 02: Organic food purchasing frequency

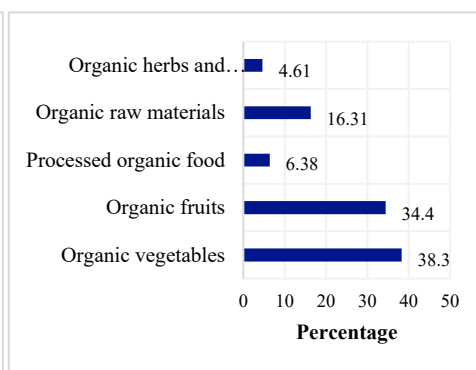


Figure 03: Type of organic food purchased

Place of purchasing organic food



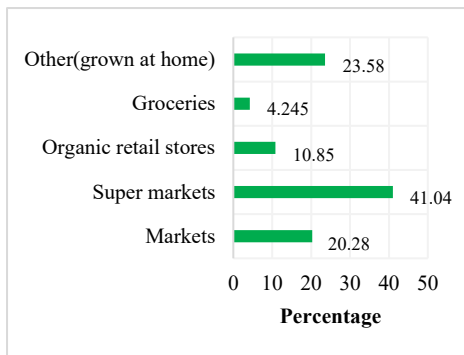


Figure 04: Place of Purchasing organic food

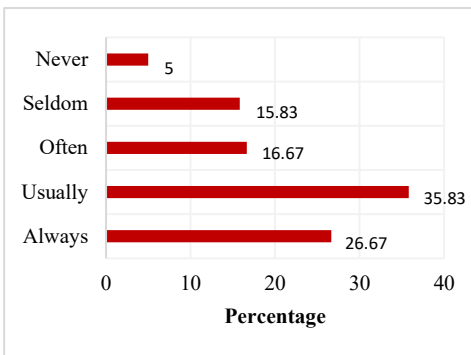


Figure 05: Attention on organic food labels

Pearson Correlation Analysis

According to Prion & Haerling (2020) the rules of thumb for interpretation of Pearson, The results showed (Table 05) that the independent variables namely attitude ($r = 0.724$), subjective norm ($r = 0.711$), perceived behavioural control ($r = 0.692$) and organic food characteristics ($r=0.688$) were strongly correlated to the purchase intention toward organic foods, while health concern ($r = 0.580$), price ($r=0.571$) and environmental concern ($r=0.466$) were moderately correlated to the purchase intention at 0.01 significant level (2-tailed). When it comes to buying organic food, attitude is everything. If people genuinely believe in the benefits of organic food—whether it's for health, taste, or safety—they are far more likely to buy it. This means that businesses should focus on shaping positive perceptions by highlighting the advantages of organic food through branding, advertisements, and awareness campaigns. But attitude doesn't develop in isolation—social influence plays a huge role. When friends, family, or society encourage organic food consumption, people tend to follow suit. This is why word-of-mouth marketing, influencer promotions, and social media advocacy can be incredibly effective in boosting organic food sales. Another key factor is perceived quality. If consumers think organic food tastes better, is fresher, and is

safer, they are more likely to buy it, even if it costs a bit more. That's why brands should consistently reinforce these qualities in their messaging.

Accessibility also matters—people need to feel that buying organic food is easy and convenient. If it's available in more stores and at reasonable prices, purchase rates will naturally rise. Price is a factor, but not the biggest one—while higher prices may discourage some buyers, people are still willing to pay more if they truly believe in the product's value. Interestingly, while health-conscious consumers do prefer organic food, their health concerns alone don't drive purchases as strongly as attitude or social influence. That's why health-related messaging should be paired with trust-building efforts—like certifications and quality assurances—to encourage purchases.

Lastly, environmental concerns, while important, are not the main motivator. People may support eco-friendly practices, but when it comes to food choices, they often prioritize taste, price, and accessibility first. In short, to increase organic food sales, businesses should focus on shaping positive attitudes, leveraging social influence, building trust in quality, improving accessibility, and reinforcing value.

Table 05: Pearson correlation matrix between dependent and independent variables

	PI	ATT	SN	PBC	EC	P	OFC	HC
PI	1							
ATT	0.724**	1						
SN	0.711**	0.690	1					
PBC	0.692**	0.613	0.603	1				
EC	0.466**	0.478	0.462	0.396	1			
P	0.571**	0.718	0.598	0.456	0.338	1		
OFC	0.688**	0.733	0.678	0.574	0.413	0.756	1	
HC	0.580**	0.508	0.496	0.654	0.361	0.459	0.503	1

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Multiple Linear Regression Analysis

The results revealed an R-squared value of 0.6847, indicating that 68.5% of the variance in consumer purchase intention towards organic food can be explained by the independent variables. The adjusted R-squared value is 0.6650, demonstrating consistency with the R-squared value.

According to the results (Table 06), the attitude variable with the highest coefficient value (0.278) exhibits a p-value of 0.009, which is less than the standard alpha value of 0.01, indicating significance at a 99% confidence level implying that consumers with a positive attitude toward organic food are significantly more likely to buy it. This is consistent with the findings of Ferreira & Pereira (2023) and Teixeira et al. (2021). Marketing strategies should focus on shaping favourable attitudes by emphasizing organic food's health benefits, taste, and safety. Similarly, subjective norm (0.230) and perceived behavioural control (0.264) are also significant, with p-values of 0.005, corresponding to 99% confidence level. People are more likely to purchase if family, friends, or social norms encourage organic consumption. This suggests that word-of-mouth, influencer marketing, and social media campaigns can be highly effective. If people feel they have control over buying organic food (availability, affordability), they are more likely to purchase. Expanding distribution, offering discounts, and making

organic products easier to find can boost sales. Ahmed et al. (2020), who also found that perceived behavioral control significantly impacts young consumers' purchase intentions for organic products. However, studies by Teixeira et al. (2021) and Bandara (2019) contradict this, indicating that perceived behavioral control was not a significant predictor of purchase intention. This aligns with the findings of Ahmed et al. (2020), who reported that subjective norms positively impact young consumers' purchase intentions for organic food. Similarly, Singh & Verma (2017) found that subjective norms significantly influence consumers' actual buying behavior toward organic food in India. The variable organic food characteristics have a p-value of 0.054, which falls below the threshold of 0.1, making it significant at a 90% confidence level. While perceived quality (taste, freshness, and safety) matters, it is not as influential as attitude or social norms. There is a positive relationship between the organic food characteristics and purchase intention ($\beta = 0.194$, $p = 0.054$). It aligns with Singh & Verma (2017), who argue that organic food quality is a primary driver for consumers. Additionally, Teixeira et al. (2021) found that perceived quality positively impacts consumer attitudes in shaping purchase intention. However, Curvelo et al. (2019) reported a negative relationship between sensory attributes and purchase intention.

Variables such as environmental concern, price, and health concern have p-values greater than all alpha values tested, suggesting that they do not exhibit a statistically significant relationship with the dependent variable, purchase intention of organic foods. Although individuals may advocate for sustainability, it does not directly affect their decision to purchase organic food. Similarly, the price of organic food has a minimal impact on purchase intention, indicating that consumers are willing to pay a premium if they perceive sufficient value in organic products. While health-conscious individuals often show a preference for organic food, this single factor is insufficient to solely drive purchasing behavior. However, previous studies suggest that environmental concern and health consciousness significantly strengthen attitudes toward purchasing organic food (Nguyen et al., 2019; Singh and Verma, 2017; Teixeira et al., 2021). While health consciousness has been identified as a key

factor influencing purchase intention in Sri Lanka (Kapuge, 2016). Similarly, environmental concern, although important for shaping attitudes, did not significantly impact purchase intention in this study, reinforcing findings from prior research (Secer, 2023; Kapuge, 2016). Additionally, product price perceptions did not significantly impact attitudes toward organic food purchases (Teixeira et al., 2021).

Thus, according to Table 06 the following regression equation was derived,

$$PI = -0.356 + 0.278ATT + 0.230SN + 0.264PBC + 0.070 EC - 0.065P + 0.194OFC + 0.129 HC + \varepsilon(2)$$

Where, *PI*- Purchase intention toward organic food, *ATT*- Attitude, *SN*- Subjective Norm, *PBC*- Perceived Behavioral Control, *EC*- Environmental Concern, *P*- Price, *OFC*- Organic Food Characteristics.

Table 06: Results of Multiple Linear Regression Analysis

Independent variables	Coefficient	P-value
Attitude	0.278**	0.009
Subjective norm	0.230**	0.005
Perceived behavioural control	0.264**	0.005
Environmental concern	0.070	0.388
Price	-0.065	0.514
Organic food characteristics	0.194	0.054
Health concern	0.129	0.174
Constant	-0.3560187	0.302

p<0.05; *p<0.01; *p<0.001

Conclusion

The research findings concluded that out of the seven variables examined, all the TPB variables namely attitude, subjective norm and perceived behavioural control (Teixeira et al. 2021; of Ferreira & Pereira, 2023) and organic food characteristics from organic food choice motives have a significant effect on the purchase intention toward organic

food while environmental concern, price and health concern from organic food choice motives do not have any significant effect on the purchase intention toward organic food. Consumer attitudes play a key role in shaping purchasing decisions, particularly when it comes to organic food (Teixeira et al. 2021). People who hold positive views of organic products, believing them to be beneficial, are more likely to buy them. Conversely, those

who are unconvinced of the advantages of organic food will be less inclined to choose them. Thus, it can be concluded that attitude positively effect on the purchase intention toward organic food. Besides, subjective norm which is the perceived social pressure (family, friends and significant others) to perform or not to perform a behaviour has also found to be a significant predictor on the purchase intention toward organic food. Perceived behavioral control is defined as a consumer's belief about the ease or difficulty of purchasing organic food (Ajzen, 2002). It also encompasses their perception of having access to the resources and opportunities necessary for this purchase. Consequently, the results conclude that consumers with a higher perceived ease of purchase will exhibit a stronger intention to buy organic food. Conversely, those who perceive difficulty in obtaining organic food will likely demonstrate a lower purchase intention. Furthermore, positive perceptions of organic food characteristics, such as freshness, taste, and visual appeal, are positively affect with consumer purchase intention.

The findings contribute to consumer behaviour knowledge which helps to understand the most important factors that positively affect organic food purchases.

Recommendations

The findings of this study indicate that among the examined variables, attitude, subjective norm, perceived behavioral control, and organic food characteristics significantly influence purchase intention toward organic food. Enhancing consumer attitudes toward organic food is crucial in increasing purchase intention. Prior research suggests that consumer attitudes are shaped by awareness, trust, and perceived benefits of organic products (Khan et al., 2022; Nguyen et al., 2019). It is recommended for the marketers to consider taking several initiatives in order to further develop a positive attitude regarding organic food among the consumers

and this can be done by providing more information about the benefits of organic food to safety and health of both the consumers and the environment (Teixeira et al. 2021). Enhancing accessibility through expanded distribution channels, online platforms, and competitive pricing can alleviate perceived barriers.

The purchase intention of organic food among Sri Lankan consumers is not significantly influenced by environmental concern, price and health concern. Although price sensitivity varies among consumers, offering competitive pricing or value promotions can attract price conscious individuals without compromising the perceived quality of organic products (Curvelo et al., 2019).

Limitations

Although the study has contributed significantly to understanding the research topic, it has certain limitations that should be considered. For instance, the data was collected from only a limited number of supermarkets in Colombo, which may not fully represent the broader population. Additionally, the use of convenience sampling, rather than a random sampling method, introduces potential biases and limits the generalizability of the findings. The sample size of 120, while providing valuable insights, may be considered relatively small for drawing robust conclusions.

Future Research Directions

Future research could use a larger and more representative sample. The current study examined organic food in general, not differentiating between various food products, such as organic fruit, organic vegetables, organic meat, organic milk, etc. This could restrict the ability to make generalizations based on findings. To address this, future studies could investigate and contrast consumer intentions and behaviors towards different varieties of a particular organic food product.



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