

Motivations behind Organic Food Consumption in Turkey: Impact of Health, Environment and Consumer Values on Purchase Intentions

Burcu Selin Yilmaz, Burcu Ilter

Dokuz Eylul University

Faculty of Business

selin.yilmaz@deu.edu.tr, burcu.ilter@deu.edu.tr

Abstract

Raising ecological awareness and health concerns create question marks about healthiness and sustainability of conventional foods in some customers' minds. Due to mass media coverage of environment and health concerns related to food and consumers' increasing interest in healthy nutrition and environmental protection, there is a growing demand for organic foods in all over the world. The main aim of the study is to explore the factors affecting Turkish consumers' attitudes towards organic foods and the behavioural intention of Turkish consumers to purchase organic food by the help of the theory of reasoned action (TRA). The results of the survey conducted indicate that the consumers' attitudes towards organic foods are determined by perception of organic foods, consumer values, and price perception, while their purchase intention is determined by health consciousness, perception of organic foods, consumer values, price perception, and environmental concerns.

Keywords: organic food, consumer behaviour, theory of reasoned action

JEL classifications: M31, M39

Introduction

Organic agriculture can be defined as the application of environmentally and animal friendly farming methods to produce food. The General Assembly of IFOAM - Organics International defines organic agriculture as follows:

"Organic Agriculture is a production system that sustains the health of soils, ecosystems and people. It relies on ecological processes, biodiversity and cycles adapted to local conditions, rather than the use of inputs with adverse effects. Organic Agriculture combines tradition, innovation and science to benefit the shared environment and promote fair relationships and a good quality of life for all involved." (IFOAM, 2016).

Organic agricultural production uses the methods in which the usage of chemical inputs or pesticides is avoided, and inputs used in the production process are permitted by the regulations. In organic farming, supervised and certified stages of the whole production and consumption process, from provide the highest level of protection for the environment, plants, animals and human health without polluting the soil and water resources or the quality of air (Kirazlar, 2001). Organic agriculture seeks to provide consumers, with fresh, tasty, healthy, and reliable food while respecting nature and animal welfare, and creating new opportunities for local people in rural areas.

Consumers' perceptions towards organic food products (e.g., Beaudreault, 2009) and environmentally sustainable products (e.g., Pickett- Baker and Ozaki, 2008) have been the topics of research. Moreover, standards of living, education level, and age can be considered as factors which may have impact on consumers' awareness of and knowledge about organic production and consumption (Pellegrini and Farinello, 2009). Consumers may have different motivations for consumption of organic food such as health considerations, and environmental concerns (Pellegrini and Farinello, 2009; Lockie et al., 2002; Magnusson et al., 2003; Chryssohoidis and Krystallis, 2005; Gracia and Magistris, 2008; Hughner et al., 2007; Li et al., 2007; Wier et al., 2008; Zepeda and Deal, 2009; Bellows et al., 2010; Cerjak et al., 2010; Hasançebi, 2010; Ergin and Ozsacmaci, 2011; Çabuk et al., 2014). Smith and Paladino (2010) suggest that personal health can be seen the strongest motivator for purchasing organic food when compared to family health.

The aim of this study is to determine motivations behind Turkish consumers' organic food purchase decisions by using of Theory of Reasoned Action as a base for structuring the research model.

Organic Food Consumption

Organic food consumption intentions are associated with egoistic purchase considerations (e.g., health and safety concerns) (Michaelidou and Hassan 2008); and altruistic purchase considerations (e.g., concern for the environment) (Padel and Foster 2005).

Previous research suggests that personal health concerns may drive consumers' attitudes toward organic food (Botonaki et al., 2006; Chryssohoidis and Krystallis, 2005; Harper and Makatouni, 2002; Kareklas et al., 2014; Magnusson et al. 2003; Makatouni 2002; Padel and Foster 2005) and intent to purchase organic food (Kareklas et al., 2014; Schifferstein and Ophuis, 1998; Soler et al., 2002). Individuals' perception that organic food is healthier with greater nutritional value compared to conventional food, and produced naturally without using harmful chemicals results in positive attitudes towards organic food (Kareklas et al., 2014; Ott, 1990; Pino et al., 2012; Squires et al., 2001; Wandel and Bugge, 1997; Wilkins and Hillers, 1994). Moreover, organic farming is perceived safer as compared to conventional or industrial farming (Kareklas et al., 2014; Lacey, 1992; Kouba, 2003; Sangkumchaliang and Huang, 2012).

Environmental concerns as altruistic purchase considerations affect consumers' attitudes toward organic food (Ahmad et al., 2010; Honkanen et al., 2006; Michaelidou and Hassan, 2008; Squires et al., 2001; Wandel and Bugge, 1997) and purchase intentions (Ahmad and Juhdi, 2010). Animal welfare is considered to be another factor influencing consumer's intention to purchase organic food (Harper and Makatouni, 2002) however, research shows that animal welfare is a less influential concern in purchasing organic food as compared to environmental concerns (Hughner et al., 2007).

Product attributes such as quality (Lockie et al., 2002; Smith and Paladino, 2010; Hamzaoui-Essoussi and Zahaf, 2012; Ergin and Ozsacmaci, 2011), better taste (Lockie et al., 2002; Dahm et al., 2009; Hasançebi, 2010; Hughner et al., 2007; Stolz et al., 2010; Hamzaoui- Essoussi and Zahaf, 2012; Ergin and Ozsacmaci, 2011),

nutrition value and freshness (Fotopoulos and Chrysochoidis, 2000) have also found to be influential in organic food consumption. The family life cycle could be considered as another factor that is known to affect organic food consumption patterns of consumers. Organic food consumption is thought to be an alternative lifestyle beginning with pregnancy (Pino et al., 2012), the arrival of a baby (Hamzaoui-Essoussi and Zahaf, 2012) and having children in the family (Hamzaoui-Essoussi and Zahaf, 2012). However, motivations organic food consumption for and importance attached to different organic food consumption motives vary across countries (Cerjak et al., 2010; Quah and Tan, 2010) which makes it difficult to generalize the findings.

The Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA)

The Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) is a model that finds its origins in the field of social psychology. The Theory of Reasoned Action was developed by Martin Fishbein and Icek Ajzen as an improvement over Information Integration theory (Ajzen and Fishbein, 1980; Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975) and this theory added another element in the process of persuasion, behavioural intention to define the links between beliefs, attitudes, norms, intentions, and behaviours of individuals. The Theory of Reasoned Action is concerned with behavior; however, it also recognizes that there are situations (or factors) that limit the influence of attitude on behavior. Because it separates behavioral intention from behavior, the theory also discusses the factors that limit the influence of attitudes (or behavioural intention) on behaviour.

The Theory of Reasoned Action uses two elements; attitudes and norms (or the expectations of other people), to predict behavioral intent. Attitudes have two components: the evaluation and strength of a belief. The second component influencing behavioral intent, subjective norms, also have two components: normative beliefs (what an individual thinks others would want or expect him/her to do) and motivation to comply (how important it is to an individual to do what he/she thinks others expect). According to this model, an individual's behavior is determined by his/her behavioral intention to perform it. This intention is determined by the individual's attitudes and his subjective norms towards the behavior. Fishbein and Ajzen (1975, p. 302) define the subjective norms as "the person's perception that most people who are important to him think he should or should not perform the behavior in question."

According to this theory behavioural intention is determined by attitude and subjective norms (Behavioral Intention = Attitude + Subjective norms). The attitude of an individual towards a behavior is determined by his/her beliefs on the consequences of this behavior, multiplied by his/her evaluation of these consequences (Davis et al., 1989). Beliefs are defined by the person's subjective probability that performing a particular behavior will produce specific results (Al-Lozi and Papazafeiropoulou, 2012). This model therefore suggests that external stimuli influence attitudes by modifying the structure of the person's beliefs. Moreover, behavioral intention is also determined by the subjective norms that are themselves determined by the normative beliefs of an individual and by his motivation to comply to the norms. This theory is designed to make statistical generalizations predicting people's behavior (Feng, 2012): People make conscious choices based on two factors: 1. how strongly they perceive the benefits to lead to a positive outcome, and 2. the social norms, risks, and rewards they

associate with that choice. This theory predicts the attitudes and behaviors of large groups of people.

Attempts to understanding determinants of attitude and behavior yielded the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) proposed by Fishbein and Ajzen (1975), which suggests that behavioural intentions as the antecedents of behavior are determined by attitude and subjective norms (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975; Madden et al., 1992; Truong, 2009). The main idea in the TRA is that an individual's behavioural intention in a specific context depends on attitude toward performing the target behaviour and on subjective norm, which refers to "the person's perception that most people who are important to him or her think s/he should or should not perform the behaviour in question" (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975, p. 302; Truong, 2009). This theory's explanation of buying behavior is criticized since some external factors could influence the buying behavior of consumers (De Cannière et al., 2009; Foxall, 2005; Infosino, 1986; Morrison, 1979; Sun and Morwitz, 2010). The aim of this study is to understand the influence of health-related factors, green consumer values, and concern for environment on the organic food purchase behaviour.

Research

Design and Methodology

The scale related with health consciousness and food relations were taken from Chen (2009). The scale of Chen (2009) was adapted from Oude Ophuis (1989). The original health consciousness scale is an 11-item scale which can be applied to assess the degree of readiness to undertake health actions (Oude Ophuis, 1989). The original scale consists of 10 items and first 4 items of the scale is used in this study. In order to determine Turkish consumers organic food purchase motivations, a 16-item scale covering organic food related motivations, environmental concerns, subjective norm, price perception, and consumer values were adapted from Voon et al., 2011. The Turkish translation of health consciousness scale (only four items of the scale was used after evaluation of pilot study results) was rated on a five-point scale (ranging from '1=totally agree' to '5=totally disagree').

Data was collected during February and March 2016 via online questionnaire and by distributing questionnaires to customers at markets where organic food was sold. We had a total of 729 filled questionnaires; however 40 of the questionnaires were omitted, since respondents have stated that they did not do any grocery shopping for their houses, and another 67 questionnaires were omitted because of missing data. At the end, 622 usable questionnaires have left.

Research findings

The majority of respondents were females that account for 70.7%. A large percentage of the respondents (78.8%) are in the age group of 25 to 45 years old. In terms of educational level, the highest percentage was bachelor's degree with 46.5%. All demographic findings, the respondents' income levels and perception of income are given in Table 1 and Table 2.

Table 1: Demographic findings

GENDER (n=622)			NUMBER OF PEOPLE LIVING IN THE SAME HOUSE (n=622)			EDUCATION (n=622)		
	n	%		n	%		n	%
Female	440	70.7	1	121	19.5	Primary School	0	0.0
Male	182	29.3	2	201	32.3	High School	39	6.3
AGE (n=622)			3	172	27.7	2-year College	25	4.0
18-24	64	10.3	4	115	18.5	Bachelor's Degree	289	46.5
25-35	234	37.6	5	13	2.1	Master's Degree	151	24.3
36-45	256	41.2				Ph.D.	118	19.0
46-55	44	7.1						
56-65	12	1.9						
66-75	12	1.9						
HEALTH SITUATION (n=622)			CHILDREN UNDER SCHOOL AGE (n=622)			MARITAL STATUS (n=622)		
Completely Healthy	186	29.9	Yes	96	15.4	Single living alone	177	28.5
Almost Healthy	406	65.3	No	526	84.6	Single living with family	134	21.5
Not Healthy	30	4.8				Married without children	95	15.3
						Married with children	158	25.4
						Empty nest	18	2.9
						Divorced living with children	40	6.4

Table 2: Monthly household income and perception of income

PERCEPTION OF INCOME (n=622)			MONTHLY HOUSEHOLD INCOME (TRY) * (n=622)		
	n	%		n	%
Very Low	0	0.0	Between 0-1000 TL	27	4.3
Low1	7	1.1	Between 1001-2000	47	7.6
Low2	39	6.3	Between 2001-3000	137	22.0
Low3	90	14.5	Between 3001-4000	71	11.4
Middle	220	35.4	Between 4001-5000	119	19.1
High1	179	28.8	Between 5001-6000	75	12.1
High2	87	14.0	6001+	146	23.5
High3	0	0.0			
Very High	0	0.0			

*3.2860 TRY= 1 EURO (28.05.2016)

In order to examine motivations driving Turkish consumers to purchase organic foods, the following hypotheses related to factors of survey are proposed:

H_{1a}: An individual's health consciousness level will positively affect his/her attitudes towards organic foods.

H_{1b}: An individual's health consciousness level will positively affect his/her organic food purchase intention.

H_{2a}: The organic food features will positively affect an individual's attitudes towards organic foods.

H_{2b}: The organic food features will positively affect an individual's organic food purchase intention.

H_{3a}: Consumer values will positively affect an individual's attitudes towards organic foods.

H_{3b}: Consumer values will positively affect an individual's organic food purchase intention.

H_{4a}: An individual's price perception of organic foods will positively affect his/her attitudes towards organic foods.

H_{4b}: An individual's price perception of organic foods will positively affect his/her organic food purchase intention.

H_{5a}: An individual's concern for environment will positively affect his/her attitudes towards organic foods.

H_{5b}: An individual's concern for environment will positively affect his/her organic food purchase intention.

H_{6a}: Subjective norm will positively affect an individual's attitudes towards organic foods.

H_{6b}: Subjective norm will positively affect an individual's organic food purchase intention.

H₇: An individual's attitudes towards organic foods will positively affect his/her organic food purchase intention.

Table 3 reports the descriptive statistics and Pearson correlations for the scales.

Table 3: Descriptive statistics and correlations

Variable	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Health Consciousness	2.4518	.89948	1							
Product-Related	1.3945	.43904	.370**	1						
Consumer Values	1.6793	.60628	.384**	.659**	1					
Price Perception	2.0477	.75339	.095*	-.031	-.111**	1				
Environmental Concerns	2.4076	.98616	.409**	.190**	.114**	-.056	1			
Subjective Norm	1.8915	.82476	.329**	.371**	.332**	.009	.129**	1		
Attitudes towards Organic Foods	1.6215	.52184	.315**	.675**	.824**	.001	.110**	.279**	1	
Organic Food Purchase Intention	1.8453	.61663	.377**	.530**	.669**	.168**	.013	.277**	.599**	1

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level

In order to examine factors influencing the organic foods purchase of the respondents, the exploratory factor analysis was applied to the survey data, and KMO and Barlett's Test was conducted. KMO coefficient is 0.814 and the significance level of Barlett's Test is 0.000. Items of the scale were grouped using principal component factor analysis with Varimax rotation with Kaiser Normalization, and 20 of the items were loaded under six factors explaining 70.644% of the total variance. The results of the factor analysis are shown in Table 4. The first factor containing 4 items is named as "Health Consciousness". This factor explains 16.269% of the variance. This finding is also supporting the existing literature as health being the main motivator of consuming organic food (Pellegrini and Farinello, 2009; Lockie et al., 2002; Magnusson et al., 2003; Chryssohoidis and Krystallis, 2005; Gracia and Magistris, 2008; Hughner et al., 2007; Li et al., 2007; Wier et al., 2008; Zepeda and Deal, 2009; Bellows et al., 2010; Cerjak et al., 2010; Hasançebi, 2010; Ergin and Ozsacmaci, 2011; Çabuk et al., 2014). The second factor contains three items and it is named as "Product Related" factor which is related to perceived characteristics of organic food by consumers. This factor explains 16.133% of the variance.

Table 4: Factor analysis results

Reasons for buying organic food products ($\alpha= 0.813$)	F1	F2	F3	F4	F5	F6
Health Consciousness ($\alpha= 0.896$) Mean=2.4518; SD=.89948						
I have the impression that I sacrifice a lot for my health.	.823					
I am prepared to leave a lot, to eat as healthy as possible.	.844					
I think that I take health into account a lot in my life.	.830					
I think it is important to know well how to eat healthy.	.829					
Product-related ($\alpha= 0.840$) Mean=1.3945; SD=.43904						
Organic foods are better for my health.		.772				
Organic foods contain no harmful chemicals (such as additives, pesticides etc.) and GMOs.		.698				
Organic foods' production process is healthier.		.645				
Organic foods are better than conventional foods.		.720				
Organic foods do not make any harm to my health		.761				
Consumer Values ($\alpha= 0.801$) Mean=1.6793; SD=.60628						
Sustainability considerations affect my food purchase.			.763			
I consider myself as a responsible consumer.			.656			
I consider myself as an environmentally conscious person.			.816			
I consider myself as an ethical consumer.			.531			
Price Perception ($\alpha= 0.751$) Mean=2.0477; SD=.75339						
Organic foods are expensive.				.810		
I think organic foods are more suitable for high income group.				.693		
I am not sure that I am ready to pay premium for organic foods.				.762		
Environmental Concerns ($\alpha= 0.800$) Mean=2.4076; SD=.98616						
Organic foods do less harm to the environment.					.844	
Organic foods' production process is environmentally friendly.					.836	
Subjective Norm ($\alpha= 0.702$) Mean=1.8915; SD=.82476						
The people I care think that consuming organic foods is a better choice.						.811
My family and friends suggest me to consume organic foods.						.733
Explained Variance	70.644					

The third factor called as "Consumer Values", and explains 11.850% of total variance. This factor contains items which examines the respondents' attitudes towards responsible consumption and ethical consumer values. The fourth factor, "Price Perception", contains 3 items related to price perception of consumers and explains 9.502% of total variance. The 2 items of the fifth factor, named as "Environmental Concerns", examines environment friendliness perception of organic foods and explains 8.981% of total variance. The last factor, "Subjective Norm", contains two items related to the others (family, friends, loved ones) influence on consumers' organic food consumption, and explains 7.909% of total variance.

Table 5: Regression analysis

Variable	B	SE	b	t	Significance
R ² = 0.359					
Attitude → Intention	.708	.038	.599	18.650	.000
R ² (Attitude) = 0.719					
Health Consciousness → Attitude	-.028	.015	-.048	-1.810	.071
Product-Related → Attitude	.286	.035	.241	8.158	.000
Consumer Values → Attitude	.604	.026	.702	23.702	.000
Price Perception → Attitude	.064	.015	.092	4.214	.000
Environmental Concerns → Attitude	.007	.013	.013	.549	.583
Subjective Norm → Attitude	-.019	.015	-.030	-1.256	.210
R ² (Intention) = 0.536					
Health Consciousness → Intention	.095	.023	.138	4.089	.000
Product-Related → Intention	.190	.053	.135	3.561	.000
Consumer Values → Intention	.571	.039	.562	14.747	.000
Price Perception → Intention	.175	.023	.214	7.613	.000
Environmental Concerns → Intention	-.076	.019	-.122	-4.003	.000
Subjective Norm → Intention	.007	.023	.009	.294	.769

Table 6: Hypotheses

Hypotheses	Standardized Coefficient	t-value	Result
H _{1a} Health Consciousness → Attitude	-.048	-1.810	Rejected
H _{1b} Health Consciousness → Intention	.138	4.089	Supported
H _{2a} Product-Related → Attitude	.241	8.158	Supported
H _{2b} Product-Related → Intention	.135	3.561	Supported
H _{3a} Consumer Values → Attitude	.702	23.702	Supported
H _{3b} Consumer Values → Intention	.562	14.747	Supported
H _{4a} Price Perception → Attitude	.092	4.214	Supported
H _{4b} Price Perception → Intention	.214	7.613	Supported
H _{5a} Environmental Concerns → Attitude	.013	.549	Rejected
H _{5b} Environmental Concerns → Intention	-.122	-4.003	Supported
H _{6a} Subjective Norm → Attitude	-.030	-1.256	Rejected
H _{6b} Subjective Norm → Intention	.009	.294	Rejected
H ₇ Attitude → Intention	.599	18.650	Supported

Table 5 presents the results of regression analysis with attitudes towards organic foods and intention to purchase organic foods as dependent variables to predict consumers' motivators for organic food consumption. Based on the evaluation of the regression analysis results, supported and rejected hypotheses are shown in Table 6. Therefore, attitudes towards organic foods are affected by perception of organic foods, consumer values, and price perception. Consumers' purchase intention of organic foods is influenced by health consciousness, perception of organic foods, consumer values, price perception, and environmental concerns. According to the study results, nine of the thirteen proposed hypotheses were supported.

Conclusion

Theory of Reasoned Action, which aims to explain the reasons behind one's intention to perform a behavior which depends on the attitude towards performing the behavior and subjective norm, is used as a tool for structuring the research to understand roles of different factors

in determining Turkish consumers' attitudes towards organic foods and organic food purchase intentions. The results of this study indicate that the consumers' attitudes towards organic foods are determined by perception of organic foods, consumer values, and price perception, while their purchase intention is determined by health consciousness, perception of organic foods, consumer values, price perception, and environmental concerns. Consumers' health consciousness has a stronger relation to consumers' organic food purchase intention than do environmental concerns. The others' opinions and suggestions concerning organic food consumption has no affect on attitudes towards organic foods and organic food purchase intention of consumers. The model of the study which summarizes the research design and findings is given in figure below (Figure 1).

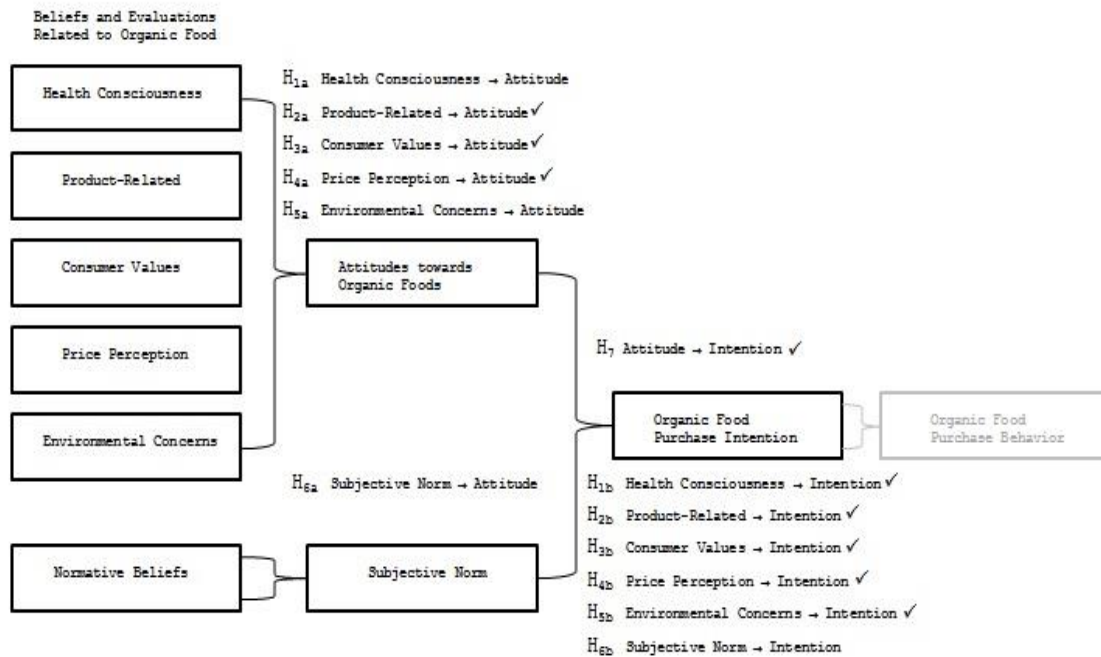


Figure 1: The Research Model and Summary of Findings

Food consumption patterns vary in different countries based on culture, living standards, and development levels. Motivations for organic food consumption have been explored by using the same or adapted scales in many countries of the world. For Turkish consumers, developing the most suitable scale would yield better results in explaining their organic food consumption motivations.

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