

Organic food: A case of Gauteng Province in South Africa

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ABSTRACT

The thriving consumption of organic food is not only motivated by hedonic value, interpersonal influence and preference, it is also the result of the ease of access and availability of organic food in numerous food stores, which has reduced the scarcity of organic food. Factors such as hedonic value, preferences, interpersonal influence and preference allow them to continue to purchase and stock more organic products. The present study focuses on organic products as a fundamental cue likely to impact customers and consumers to continuance purchase intentions and for retailers to market and stock more organic food. Structured questionnaires were distributed to consumers in the Gauteng province only. This study used a quantitative research methodology using Smart PLS 3. This software was employed to test the relationships among the three hypotheses. The results show that there is a positive relationship between the three proposed hypotheses. Based on the findings of this research, recommendations will be made to both the companies and the customers to purchase and stock more organic products. This study is expected to have real-world and academic implications to policy makers for food production companies and retailer shops such as Woolworths, Checkers, Makro, OK and Pick n Pay. In addition, the study will provide new insights and added first-hand knowledge to the existing body of literature, which is scant in South Africa.

Keywords: Organic food, Hedonic value, Interpersonal influence, Preferences, Continuance purchasing intention

INTRODUCTION

During the last decade, environmental issues have become a concern for researchers, academicians and professionals in all industries. Food consumption is not left behind; food consumption is a main concern in the area of food production because of its effect on consumers' health, the environment, organisation and economy (Reisch, Eberle & Lorek 2013). Moreover, for Nedra, Sharma and Dakhli (2015), environment and health are the most vital motives for the purchase of organic products. This is to say that health and environmental reasons are more encouraging than any other reason and consumers will be more willing to buy organic products with a greater intensity. Consumers consumption and continuous purchasing intention are driven by different factors such as place of origin, production process, transport or delivery condition, preservatives, even the way the food is cooked and consumed (Annunziata & Vecchio 2016). Additionally, the thriving consumption of organic food is not only motivated by the abovementioned factors, it is also the result of the ease of access and availability of organic food in numerous food stores, which has reduced the scarcity of organic food shopping (Hempel & Hamm 2016). On the other hand, consumers' choices can be based on other factors such as hedonic value, their preferences and interpersonal influence. The present study focuses on organic products as a fundamental cue, likely to impact customers and consumers' purchase intentions. Thus, the present study attempts to ascertain the significant

antecedents of purchasing organic products and empirically confirm the relationship between these antecedents and continuous purchasing intention. It is predictable that a better understanding of these elements would greatly help green consumers to understand and keep on purchasing these specific types of products as well as marketers to develop more suitable strategies.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

To explain the increase of green consumption occurrence, numerous viewpoints have been proposed as the antecedent variables of consumers' continuing intention to purchase green products (Loebnitz, Schuitema & Grunert 2015; Yadav & Pathak 2016; Chang & Chang 2017; Suhaily & Soelasih, 2017; Phuong & Trang 2018). Studies have empirically explored many relationships, for instance the relationship between consumer personality and green purchase intention (Lu, Chang, & Chang, 2015:205); the factors that increase consumers' purchase intentions for abnormally shaped food and organic labelling (Loebnitz et al. 2015:408) and individual differences and green consumption (Rakic & Rakic, 2015:891). Elaborating on the work of previous authors, the present study aims to investigate whether hedonic value, interpersonal influence and preference shape the influence of consumers' purchase intentions towards organic products, as well as to show the degree of the relationship between the research constructs. However, Yadav and Pathak (2016) state that the consumption of organic products is objectively a new concept in developing regions of the world such as America and Europe in contrast to their developed counterparts, so it would be interesting to study the various aspects of organic products purchase intentions in a country like South Africa. In the drive towards more globally friendly lifestyles and green consumption, this study makes a distinct contribution by elucidating how hedonic value, interpersonal influence and preference impact consumer purchase intentions, with practical and literature implications. This study also helps to address the intrinsic global problem of food waste by identifying the factors that increase consumers' purchase intentions for organic products. Moreover, the current study contributes to an understanding of the importance of continuance purchasing intention effects and consumer's attitude to interpersonal influences on organic products consumption in a developing market such as Gauteng province in South Africa.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The main research objective is to investigate the impact of hedonic value, preferences, interpersonal influence and preference on continuance to purchasing organic products. The empirical objectives are:

- To examine the relationship between hedonic value and continuance purchasing intention
- To investigate the relationship between customer preference and continuance purchasing intention
- To explore the relationship between interpersonal influence and continuance purchasing intention.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The current study limits itself to understanding the relationship between hedonic value, interpersonal influence and preference towards continuance purchasing intention of organic food.

Hedonic Value

Human consumption is an ordinary task of life that can be based on characteristic emotions (Josiana & Henrya 2014); explicitly, many products have hedonically-driven consumption (Miao, Lehto & Wei 2014) and hedonic products are defined as consumer behavioural facets that provide experiential consumption, enjoyment, gratification, adventure and pleasure while shopping (Ghazali, Soon, Mutum & Nguyen 2017). Additionally, hedonic value of organic products is related to excitement, fun and entertainment behaviour (Miao et al. 2014). Briefly, it is symbolic or emotional in nature (Kazakeviciute & Banyte, 2012). That is to say that hedonic value is associated to the individual emotional and unreasonableness stage of buyers, which frequently occur throughout the course

of consumption of the organic products (Tseng & Chang 2015). During that stage, the consumers enjoying or savouring new flavours is known as hedonic consumptions (Basaran & Buyukyilmaz 2015).

Additionally, it is very important to give a look on culture through the fact that it affects purchasing decisions. In this case, Khare (2014) argued that culture cannot be ignored because it influences consumers' decision making on organic food. Due to that, a study conducted by Çabuk, Tanrikulu and Gelibolu (2014) revealed that in some culture, it is essential that, from its production to consumption, the food process is appropriate to religious norms. This is quite the case with Halal products. Another significant point to consider is religion. Through religion, consumers have experiences and the ability to develop knowledge and understanding that determine consumer attitudes, preferences and buying intentions (Font-i-Furnols & Guerrero 2014). In meanwhile, Claret, Guerrero, Ginés, Grau, Hernández, Aguirre, Peleteiro, Fernández-Pato and Rodríguez-Rodríguez (2014) mention that religion is about the characteristics of a certain product and the way it is made, handled or distributed can influence consumer view.

Interpersonal Influence

Interpersonal influence mainly involves the impact of acting to persuade, assure or encourage others for the objective of having a precise result towards ecologically products (Cheah & Phau 2011). According to Lee (2015), through interpersonal influence, family and friends have the ability to influence someone's behaviour and attitude toward a product. Hence, the customers create a certain satisfactory image to his family or friends by purchasing what those ones like. Interpersonal influence includes two dimensions known as normative and informative, which relate to consumer behaviour (Sadachar, Khare & Manchiraju 2015). Kim, Lee and Hur (2013) distinguish between these two dimensions by saying that normative interpersonal influences are referred to as the view of others' behaviour (the norms of is) and are built on observations of how people act in a specified condition; while information interpersonal influence is the perceived support of a certain behaviour (the norms of ought) and help an individual determine what is accepted or rejected by a certain culture. In other words, normative has to do with how an individual would like to see others behave and informational deals with accepting information from others as proof of reality. This means that interpersonal influence plays a crucial role in the customers and consumers' decision making when it comes to the consumption of organic products.

Preference

In the view of Nagy-Pércsi and Fogarassy (2019:3), for organic consumers, health motivations are an imperative element in their purchasing decisions. For Massey, O'Cass and Otahal (2018), consumers prefer organic products, mostly because they have self-assurance in the safety and quality of the products. In the view of Mascarello, Pinto, Parise, Crovato and Ravarotto (2015:176), some of the factors that allow consumers to assess organic food are the technique of production, the brand, the taste, the freshness and the value of the product. The price that the consumers are able to spend on organic food depends on how consumers assess their preference (Ceschi, Canavari & Castellini 2018). Country of origin has a significant impact on consumers or customers' preferences of organic products (Xie, Gao, Swisher, & Zhao 2016:183). That is to say consumers value a lot the destination or region where organic products are coming from than international organic products (Annunziata & Vecchio 2016). Other factor that determines the preference of organic products is known as knowledge. In fact, in the words of Basha, Mason, Shamsudin, Hussain, Salem and Ali (2015:19) based on the information that consumers receive on organic products, such as their benefits on the environment and on people's health, knowledge is precise information that consumers prefer and make purchasing decision.

Continuance Purchasing Intention

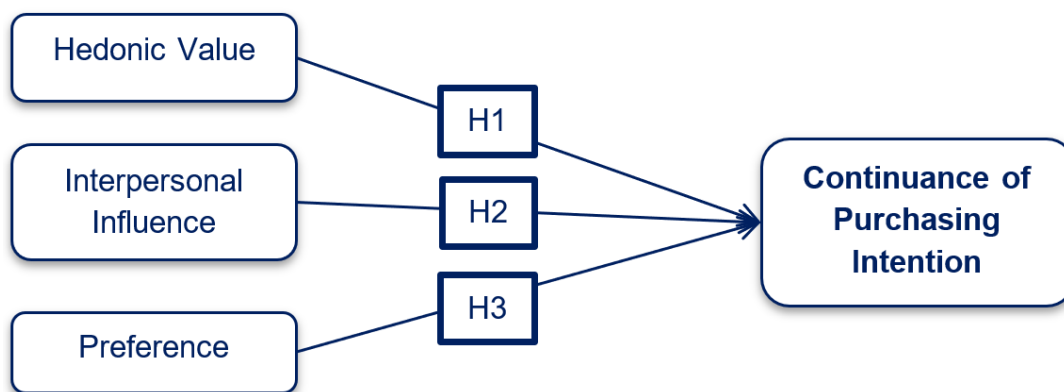
According to Izban, Balarabe and Jakada (2016:97), continuous purchase is referred as a real and actual action of customer to buy or use the product again; customers buy similar products recurrently from similar or different retailers. The repeating buying process depends on the intention that the consumers have to consume the same

product again. In the opinion of Nedra et al. (2015:74), intention is the direct precursor of purchasing behaviour because it determines the attitude, subjective norm and perceived behavioural control of consumers to purchase a product or not. Moreover, Mirabi, Akbariyeh and Tahmasebifard (2015) state that purchasing intention is associated with the conduct, opinion and attitude of the customers; purchase intention is the essential point for customers and consumers to admit and value the precise product, such as organic products. Purchase intention is an effective element for customers to keep on buying. Continuance purchasing intention depends on the satisfaction that the consumers get while consuming or using the products (He, Kim & Gong 2017). It is suggested that there are several contributing factors in the development of consumer's intention to use the product continuously and it shows the importance of satisfaction in product use leading to repurchasing the same products.

CONCEPTUALISED FRAMEWORK AND HYPOTHESES FORMULATION

From the developed literature review, the following conceptual model (Figure 1) was drawn. This conceptual framework shows the link between hedonic value, interpersonal influence, preference and continuance intention of organic products. The links between the three predictors (hedonic value, interpersonal influence, preference) and one outcome (continuance purchasing intention) represent the three hypotheses.

**FIGURE 1:
CONCEPTUALISED FRAMEWORK**



Based on the conceptualised framework above, the following three hypotheses were developed:

H₁: Hedonic value exerts a positive influence on continuance purchasing intention.

H₂: Interpersonal value exerts a positive influence on continuance purchasing intention.

H₃: Preference exerts a positive influence on continuance purchasing intention.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In the current study, a non-probability sampling method was applied to target 350 respondents located in the Gauteng province to fill in a questionnaire on organic products. The target population are users of organic products. In order to do that, a survey measurement instrument was designed using previous studies and the relevant literatures to measure hedonic value, interpersonal influence, preference and continuance intention to purchase organic products. A multiple-item, five-point Likert-type scale ranging from one 'strongly disagree' to five 'strongly agree' was applied to all constructs. In order to do that, the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) format and Analysis of Moment Structures (AMOS) were used.

Measurement Instruments

Hedonic value items and preference items were adapted from Jeffrey and Eunju (2006). Interpersonal influence and continuance purchasing intention questionnaires were adapted from Meng-Hsiang, Chia-Hui, Chao-Min and Chun-Ming (2006:897). At first a pilot study was done to test the validity and reliability of the constructs. A five-point Likert-type scale was used to measure the validity and reliability of the measurement instruments that were anchored by one (strongly disagree) to five (strongly agree) in order to express the degree of disagreement and agreement.

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS

TABLE 1
MEASUREMENT ACCURACY ASSESSMENT AND DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

Research constructs	Descriptive statistics*		Cronbach's test		C.R.	AVE	Item loadings
	Mean	SD	Item-total	α Value			
Hedonic value (HV)							
HV 1	3.35	1.405	0.500	0.712	0.712	0.666	0.553
HV 2			0.531				0.595
HV 3			0.899				0.916
Interpersonal influence (IN)							
IN 1	2.79	2.556	0.604	0.765	0.765	0.614	0.753
IN 3			0.698				0.847
Preference (PR)							
PR 1	1.22	3.280	0.500	0.819	0.819	0.705	0.456
PR 2			0.869				0.918
PR 3			0.881				0.930
Continuance intention (CI)							
CI 1	1.45	3.000	0.784	0.713	0.713	0.656	0.882
CI 2			0.755				0.849
CI 3			0.790				0.894
CI 4			0.781				0.822

HV=Hedonic value; IN= Interpersonal influence; PR=Preference; CI= Continuance intention

Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient was calculated to estimate the internal consistency of all elements and the coefficient for all the constructs was above 0.712, which is above the required threshold of 0.6 (Chiciudean, Harun, Ilea, Chiciudean, Arion, Ilies & Muresan 2019). The composite reliability greater than 0.712 of the constructs was above the recommended 0.7, with an average variance extracted (AVE) value of 0.666, which is higher than 0.5 (Persaud & Schillo 2017).

The Cronbach's alpha as well as composite reliability ($\alpha = 0.713$; 0.713) of the construct named continuance purchasing intention is above 0.70 (Shuttleworth 2015); as a result, it can be stated that the internal validity of all items assessing this construct are reliable and acceptable. The AVE is 0.656 for that same construct, which is above 0.5 (Persaud & Schillo 2017); this is acceptable. The item-to-total correlation between the items and the construct is great because the values vary from 0.822 to 0.894 and they are above 0.5, which is the standard required by Laerd Statistics (2013); this shows a strong correlation between items.

Convergent validity was measured by assessing single item loadings for each variable. The results of the convergent validity are shown in Table 1. As observed, the measurement items evaluating each construct are well above the suggested value of 0.5 (Alamsyah & Angliawati 2015:32) with construct HV having loadings ranging from 0.553 to 0.916; IN 0.456 to 0.847; PR 0.500 to 0.930 and CI ranged 0.822 to 0.894. The IN 2 item was deleted

because it was 0.333, which is less than the recommended threshold of 0.5. Therefore, it could be concluded that all the items in this study meet the required threshold of 0.5, which indicates that the instruments are acceptable and valid and converging well on the respective constructs they are supposed to measure.

A correlation figure between constructs of less than 0.60 is endorsed in the empirical literature to confirm the existence of discriminant validity (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988). As can be observed from Table 2, all the correlations were below the acceptable level of 0.60. Drawing from tables 2 and 3, the results further confirm the existence of discriminant validity.

HYPOTHESES TESTING RESULTS

TABLE 2
INTER-CONSTRUCT CORRELATION MATRIX

Variables	Hedonic value (HV)	Interpersonal influence (IN)	Preference (PR)	Continuance intention (CI)
Hedonic value (HV)	0.455			
Interpersonal influence (IN)	0.513	0.479		
Preference (PR)	0.399	0.405	0.381	
Continuance intention (CI)	0.417	0.309	0.466	0.462

This section discusses the three hypotheses by addressing their validity or acceptance by applying structural equation modelling. The study has shown that hedonic value, interpersonal influence and preference have a strong and positive relationship on continuance purchasing intention regarding organic products. The results are indicated in Table 3 and Figure 2.

The results indicate that HV is significantly related to CI ($\beta = 0.028$) supporting H1 and the significance path coefficient from IN to CI ($\beta = 0.128$) supports H2. Moreover, the significance and acceptance of the coefficient of PR to CI ($\beta = 0.814$) supports H3. All the results illustrated in Table 3 and Figure 2 show that HV, IN and PR are all positively associated with continuance intention (CI), from H₁ to H₃. Moreover, through these results it can be concluded that there are strong and significant relationships between the research constructs. Based on that, all of the three hypotheses proposed in this study were supported and accepted.

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

The purpose of this paper was to identify and assess the factors that influence consumer purchase continuous intentions of organic products in the Gauteng province. The findings of this study show that the majority of the consumers in province have a high opinion of organic product and they love the organic products (Mosunmola, Adegbuyi, Kehinde, Agboola & Olokundun 2019:2). However, factors known as hedonic value, interpersonal influence and preferences need to be taken into consideration while buying organic products because they influence the continuation of buying organic products. A study done by Mosunmola et al. (2019:4) suggests that the hedonic value of organic products reflects the value of potential entertainment and enjoyment of playfulness derived from the experience of continuous purchasing intention as supported by the hypothesis H₁. This study shows that there is a positive and significant relationship between hedonic value and continuance purchasing intention.

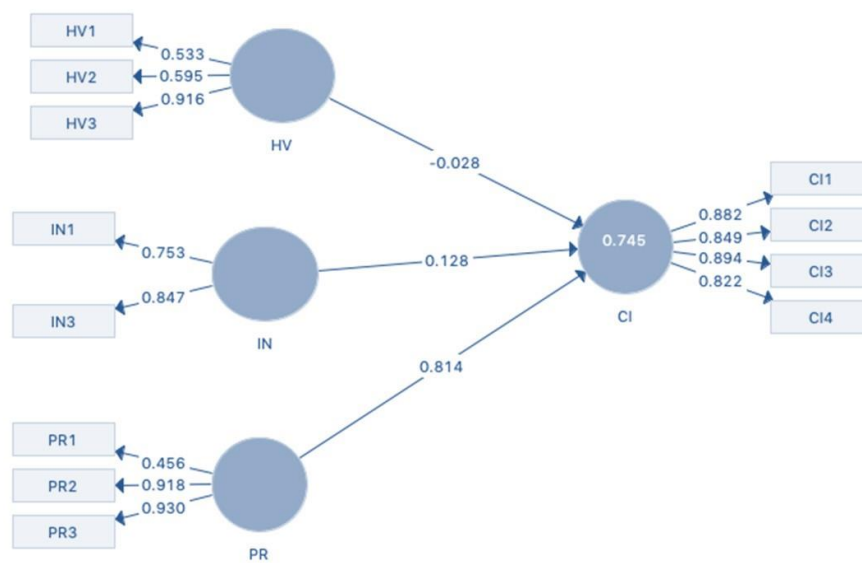
H₂, the higher the interpersonal influence and the higher the continuance purchasing intention. The study of Sadasivan, Rajakumar and Rajinikanth (2011:257) revealed that buyers exhibited a great joy and pleasure during the purchasing process, which shows a great importance of hedonic value; the result of this study work in pair with that

TABLE 3
RESULTS OF STRUCTURAL EQUATION MODEL ANALYSIS

Path	Hypothesis	Path coefficients (β)	T- Statistics	Decision on hypotheses
Hedonic value (HV) \rightarrow Continuance Intention (CI)	H1	0.028 ^a	2.005	Accept/ Significant
Interpersonal influence (IN) \rightarrow Continuance intention (CI)	H2	0.128 ^a	2.379	Accept/ Significant
Preference (PR) \rightarrow Continuance intention (CI)	H3	0.814 ^a	6.913	Accept/ Significant

^aSignificance Level $p < .10$; ^bSignificance Level $p < .05$; ^cSignificance Level $p < .01$.

FIGURE 2:
SMART PLS FIGURE



assessment; because the current study provided substantial results. Consumers purchase intention is affected or can change under the influence of internal element such as preference, or emotions or external motivations for instance the opinions of others during the buying process (Mirabi et al. 2015:268).

H₃, on another note shows a positive and strong relationship between preference and continuance purchasing intention. Younus, Rasheed and Zia (2015:9) state in their study that purchasing intention is the preference of customers to buy the product again. In other words, preference is an aspect of continuous buying or it is associated with the repurchasing process. Interpersonal influence reflects the fact that the consumers or customers are influenced by the opinions of others to make a purchasing decision (Lee, Sung & Jeon 2019:4). Interpersonal influence has been confirmed as positively influencing purchasing continuous intentions for organic products, which confirms hypothesis H₂.

Therefore, retailing companies and marketers should spend a lot of time doing promotions and advertisements on organic food such that companies like OK, Shoprite, Checkers and other retailers can focus more on stocking organic food since it has been proven beyond reasonable doubt that its healthy.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

This study was done in the Gauteng province of South Africa so other studies could attempt to replicate the study in other provinces for comparison reasons. Also, the study employed the quantitative approach; future studies might focus on qualitative or mixed method approaches to get deeper and more meaningful results. On top of that, other variables might be looked into that can lead to continuance purchasing intention like brand love, brand royalty, price and quality of the products.

CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY

This study contributed to existing work by providing new insights into purchase continuous intention in the domain of organic products. Consumers or customers keep on purchasing the same products because of their preference, hedonic value as well as the exterior opinion of others on their purchasing decisions. By focusing on these concepts, retailers will be certain to always market their organic food and have the same consumers and customers; thereby, boosting and increasing their profits. This means that repeating purchasing action leads to long-term profit because it is easier to preserve old customers than to attract new ones (Masiero, Pan & Heo 2016:19). Companies, retailers and service providers must identify elements that impact on consumers and customers to rebuy continuously. Focusing on hedonic value, interpersonal and preference factors act as important factors to help companies to market their products well and attracting more customers.

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