



Improving Sustainability Concept in Developing Countries

A study of consumers' attitudes and intention to buy organic foods for sustainability

Pittawat Ueasangkomsate^{a*}, Salinee Santiteerakul^b

^aDepartment of Management, Kasetsart Business School, Bangkok 10900, Thailand

^bDepartment of Industrial Engineering, Faculty of Engineering, Chiang Mai University, Chiang Mai 50200, Thailand

Abstract

In this research, we studied consumers' attitudes and intention to buy organic foods under the principle of sustainable development. We used questionnaires to collect the data with 316 respondents in Thailand. For reliability analysis of questionnaires, the Cronbach's Alpha reached at 0.964. The results of study showed that consumers' attitudes about organic foods are related to health at the 1st rank. Consequently, consumers' attitudes with local origin, environment, and food safety are at the 2nd, 3rd and 4th respectively. Animal welfare is the latest attribute that consumers recognized. The research applied the Pearson correlation to find the relationship among five attributes and intention to buy organic foods. The output revealed that local origin attribute is the most important to correlate positively with the intention to buy significantly. Then, animal welfare attribute and environment attribute correlate positively to purchase intention. Consequently, health and food safety are the last two aspects to correlate with the buying intention considerably.

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1. Introduction

Nowadays consumers tend to purchase high quality food for their life [1][2]. For quality foods, it consists of two important dimensions including food safety and sustainability. Due to interest in product response to food safety, human health concerns, animal welfare considerations and environmental concerns are growing progressively [3]

* Corresponding author. Tel.: +662-942-8777 Ext 1327; fax: +662-942-8840.
E-mail address: pittawat.uea@gmail.com

Therefore, green food with less chemical residuals has become more popular across the world [4][5]. The proportion of people consuming green food including organic food has been found to rise with an increase in income [6] and tend to be more highly educated than non-organic consumers [7][8]. Growing demand of organic foods is the increasing number of consumer concerns about the conventional food production [9]. Mostly consumers are receiving more information and knowledge of risky from pesticide, insecticide, fungicide and herbicide used in food production [10]. Consequently, consumers now concern about health and safe according to their foods [11].

In Thailand, consumer now realizes the issues of environment and health rather than before. These concerns bring some Thai consumers looking for fine and nutritious food without or less chemical residuals. Therefore, the market of organic agriculture currently is expanding more and more in Thailand [12]. Ministry of Commerce reported that market value of organic agriculture in 2005 reached at \$23 million in which increased around 145% from \$9.4 million in 2002 [13]. Beside the problem of Thai people's health is another concern according to their foodstuff, behavior of some consumers is unsanitary. They have more cholesterol and less fiber without fruit and vegetables. In addition, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) reported that Thailand used insecticide in 4th rank of the world and imported agriculture chemical around 30,000 million THB per year that probably cause to farmers to the high rate of cancer than other occupations [14].

Thus, the aim of this paper is to study the relationship between Thai consumers' attitudes and intention to buy organic foods. Then, related institutes could develop a sustainable strategic to expand the organic market from increasing customer's demand as well as to increase production from producers furthermore.

2. Literature Reviews

2.1. *Green food and organic food*

Green foods refer to foods that are safe, fine quality, nutritious, healthy to consumers and they are concerned with animal welfare produced under the principle of sustainable development [15]. In addition, green product, which is the umbrella of green foods defined as products that are typically nontoxic, made from recycled material, or minimally packaged. Besides green food also refers to original grown, recycle or reusable, contain natural ingredient or recycle content, do not pollute environment and do not test on animals [16][17]. Green foods could be classified into two groups. The first group allows for the use of a certain limit of chemicals whereas the second group refers to organic foods [10]. Organic foods refer to food raised, grown and store and/or processed without the use of synthetically produced chemicals or fertilizers, herbicides, pesticides, fungicides, growth hormones and regulators or generic modification [18]. All green foods are not organic foods. Food that permitted to be sold with the green food logo is safe and nutritious whereas organic food is the most stringent certification [19]. While Rezai et al. [20] expressed green food is not only about being organic, but it also includes the concept of food safety, health issues, environmental hazard as well as animal welfare. For consumers who are conscious of and interested in environmental issues, they are defined as green consumers [21].

2.2. *Organic food in Thailand*

In Thailand, organic movement was initiated by farmers and local NGOs in the 1980s. In the year 2004 about 1,500 hectares of cropland with 2,800 farms were certified organically and then increased to 21,701 hectares by 2006, while market value increased by 3.4% between 2005 to 2006 [22]. Public sector has set up several projects to support organic farming and has developed national standards for organic production [23]. Standards and certification are provided by national and private organizations [23] as details follows:

- Standards and Certification by National Government: A certification body for organic products called "Organic Thailand" which is managed by the Department of Agriculture (DOA), Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives.
- Standards and Certification by International Movement of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM): A certification body for organic product called "Organic Agriculture Certification Thailand" which accredited by IFOAM since 2001.
- Standards and Certification by several foreign organizations: i.e., Soil Association, BioAgriCoop.

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