

# Evaluation of Personal Factors as Antecedents of Organic Foods Buyer Behavior in Kenya: A *Post-Positivism Approach*

Charles Kamau<sup>1</sup>, David Kiragu<sup>2</sup>, Dr. Rosemary Kagundu<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>PhD Candidate, School of Business Management and Economics, Dedan Kimathi University of Technology, P.O Box Private Bag, Dedan Kimathi, Kenya  
Email: ckamau2007[at]gmail.com

<sup>2</sup>Associate Professor, School of Business Management and Economics, Dedan Kimathi University of Technology, P.O Box Private Bag, Dedan Kimathi, Kenya  
Email: drkiragu[at]gmail.com  
david.kiragu[at]dkut.ac.ke

<sup>3</sup> Lecturer, School of Business Management and Economics, Dedan Kimathi University of Technology, P. O Box Private Bag, Dedan Kimathi, Kenya  
Email: rosemary.kagundu[at]dkut.ac.ke

**Abstract:** *It is documented that the demand for organic foods has been growing exponentially in many developed economies but the same seem to have stagnated in developing and emerging economies. Kenya is deemed to be an emerging economy. The purpose of this study was to analyze the personal factors as antecedents of organic foods buyer behavior in Kenya. The specific objective of this study was to analyze the influence of personal factors on organic foods buyer behavior in Kenya. The study adopted a post-positivism research philosophy and mixed research design. From the target population of 6,130 organic foods buyers from outlets selling certified organic foods in Kenya, a proportionate sample of 376 respondents was selected. A semi-designed questionnaire was used to collect primary data for the stimulus variable and response variables. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21.0 was employed in the data analysis. To test the consistency and validity of the research instrument, a pilot study was conducted in Nyeri and Nakuru Counties in Kenya, and a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.712 was attained which depicted a high reliability for the research instrument. Construct validity was confirmed by a resultant Kaiser-Meyer Olkin (KMO) coefficient of 0.754. The hypothesis was tested using bivariate linear regression model at 95% degrees of confidence. This study found that personal factors had a p-value <0.05 in the model and hence found to have a statistically significant influence on organic foods buyer behavior in Kenya. This study recommends due regard to personal factors and deliberate investment in messaging of personal factors in design of the marketing mix among the organic food dealers, as the same will stimulate more sales and hence profitability of these enterprises.*

**Keywords:** buyer behavior, personal factors, organic foods, antecedents, bivariate

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Background of the Study

Globally, the interest in organically produced food products is rising as a consequence of consumer's interest in food safety, health considerations, conventional agriculture practices, animal welfare and the rising awareness in environmental protection (Wee, Ishmael, & Ishak, 2014). The demand can be driven by a number of factors, including social factors, cultural factors, psychological factors and personal factors. Personal characteristics are the stable qualities that make an individual unique as well as consistent in adjustments to a changing environment, but they do vary in degree from an individual to an individual. Given that personality studies apply to a person rather than a group, it's difficult to make generalizations on buyer behavior (Onkivist & Shaw, 2004). Kotler and Armstrong (2012) advanced personal characteristics to include the buyer's age and life-cycle stage, occupation, economic situation, lifestyle, and self-concept. Personality is an indicator of personal dissimilarities. It is a constructive concept because it facilitates marketing managers to classify consumers into different groups based on a single or several traits. If each

individual is different in terms of all personality attributes, it would be impossible to group consumers into diverse segments. Marketers may not change consumer personas to conform to their products or service offerings, but if they are cognizant with the specific personality characteristics that influence specific consumer responses, they can endeavor to appeal to the relevant attributes inherent in their target group of consumers (Sandip, Tarun, Mollika, & Enamul, 2013).

Kotler and Armstrong (2012), emphasized that age and lifecycle of consumers influence the goods and services they purchase over their lifetimes. Tastes and preferences in food, clothing, cars, and leisure are often correlated with age. Buyer behavior is also influenced by the stage of the family's life cycle as it goes through the phases of maturity. Marketers sometimes define their target markets in terms of life-cycle stage and develop appropriate products and marketing tactics for each stage. Occupation is a personality element that also affects buyer behavior. For instance, blue collar employee buys more of rugged clothes while white collar employee's and executives buy suits. Marketers aim at identifying the occupational groups that are interested in their products and services. Economic situation likewise impacts on the consumer's buying behavior. Income remains

a significant variable since countries with less per capita income also experience a drop in per capita consumption of organic foods as they are considered expensive (Dangi, Gupta, & Narula, 2020). Organizations are forced to redesign and re-position their products so as to adapt and survive in unpredictable economic environment. Since incomes have great consequences on purchase and consumption of products and services, marketers need to segment their consumer markets based on income in order to focus on the subgroup they can serve profitably (Akpan, 2016).

In addition to age, lifestyle is another personality characteristic that defines a pattern of consumption that reflects an individuals' choices of how to spend his or her time and money, and these alternatives are essential to define consumer identity. When applied prudently, the lifestyle concept can assist marketers in understanding dynamic consumer values and how they influence buying behavior. Consumers don't just purchase products, but they buy values and lifestyles which those products symbolize (Solomon, 2018). Personality and self-concept are characteristics that have an impact on buyer behavior. Kotler and Armstrong (2012), described personality as unique psychological features that distinguish an individual or group. Personality is usually described in terms of traits such as self-confidence, dominance, sociability, independence, defensiveness, adaptability, and aggressiveness. Personality is useful in analyzing buyer behavior for certain products or brand choices. Self-concept refers to the notion that an individual's possessions reflect their identities. Marketers need to understand the correlation between the buyer's self-concept and values, so as to understand consumer behavior. The rationale for this study therefore, was to analyze personal factors as possible antecedents of organic foods buyer behavior in Kenya.

## 1.2 Problem Statement

The global trend in consumption of organic foods points that the same is rising in developed economies of North America, the European Union and some Asian countries such as Japan. In contrast, organic food consumption in the developing and emerging countries, like Kenya remains low and stagnant. For instance, 85% of the organic food produce in Kenya is exported as the potential for the local market has not yet been fully optimized and remains rudimentary (Wangari, 2022). This is despite Kenya having an estimated human population of 55 million in the year 2023 with an estimated annual population growth rate of 2%. The Country is coupled with a growing middle class with a higher disposable income (National Council for Population and Development, 2020). In order to attain sustainable growth in the Kenyan organic foods industry, expanding the knowledge on the drivers of organic foods buyer behavior then becomes plausible for the organic foods stakeholders. In Kenya, factors influencing organic foods buyer behavior have not been adequately documented and generalization of research findings on the phenomenon in the developed countries may not fit the Kenyan context owing to a possible variation in personal factor-drivers of buyer behavior of organic foods. Economic-marketing theory point that indeed certain factors have the capability to predict buyer behavior

(Kotler, 2012). In light of the aforesaid, this research aimed at addressing the highlighted contextual knowledge gap analyzing the personal factors as antecedents of organic foods buyer behavior in Kenya.

## 2. Study Objective

The general objective of the study was to analyze the influence of personal factors on organic foods buyer behavior in Kenya.

### 2.1 The Engel-Kollat-Blackwell Model of Consumer Behavior

The proponents of this model were Engel, Kollat and Blackwell. The model, which was developed in 1978 is also described as the EKB model. It is grounded on consumer psychology models, such as the theory of buyer behavior by Howard and Sheth (1969). Engel, Kollat and Blackwell advanced five sequential phases of the consumer's personal decision model. The first phase was the personal need, want or personal problem recognition. The second stage involved personal searching for alternate solutions which encompassed getting related information from several sources, which included the outside and the internal settings. Personal evaluation of alternatives was the third phase where the options are exposed to the buyer's individual criterion in determining the preference. Upon making the decision, the buyer moved to the fourth phase where the selected alternative is purchased. The last stage encompassed the post-purchase assessment (Engel, Blackwell, & Kollat, 1978). The study by Parson and Vancic (2020), on altered purchase behaviour in the COVID 19 pandemic in Sweden, indicated that the EKB model was later expanded in 1995 by Engel, Blackwell, and Miniard to become the EBM model with the aim of accommodating information input, information processing, and any additional factors influencing the decision process. Contrasted to the original EKB model, the EBM model puts more emphasis on the external variables affecting the buyer decision process. The Devi, Singh, and Naz (2015), study on cross cultural food consumption in Fiji, posited that EBM model had two sets of dynamics that influenced buyers, specifically the environmental and personal factors. The environmental factors encompassed the marketing stimuli, economic predictors, socio-cultural factors and situational effects. In contrast, the factors that were personal related included demographical factors, psychological influences and biological dynamics. These comprised of age, culture, marital standing, profession, income, learning, attitude, personality and lifestyle. The researchers argued that these factors influenced the information processing of buyers driven by beliefs, rituals, norms, intentions, and attitudes of buyers, culminating on decisions by the consumer based on their perceptions. The model has faced criticism as it lacks broad recognition of the effect of social-cultural factors on buyer behavior. In spite of these criticisms, the EKB model is still steadily entrenched as a cornerstone of personal buyer decision making process and will remain so into the unforeseeable future (Ashman, Solomon, & Wolny, 2015). This theory supported the objective that evaluated the

influence of personal factors practices on organic foods buyer behavior in Kenya.

## 2.2 Empirical Literature

The study by Chaturvedi, Kulshreshtha, and Tripathi (2020), conducted in India on the big five personality attributes as predictors of organic food purchase intention in a developing market, introduced an alternative perspective of personal influences on consumer behaviour. The outcome indicated that agreeableness, extraversion, openness, conscientiousness, and neuroticism had a positive association with buying behavior and purchase intentions for organic food. Aertsens, Verbeke, Mondelaers, and Huylenbroeck (2009), study on personal determinants of consumption of organic foods revealed a substantial association between age and consumption of organic foods. These study findings were in concurrence with those of Mohammed, Chymis, and Shelaby (2012), in their study on determinants of organic foods consumption in Egypt, where the research concluded that younger consumers portrayed a positive motivation regarding organic food products as compared with older consumers. This suggested that age as a personal element influences organic food buying behavior. An Indian study by Singh and Verma (2017, Aertsens *et al.* (2009), Onyango *et al.* (2007), Singh and Verma (2017), Bett and Kiarie (2013), Chen (2012), found that personal factors had a significant influence on buyer behavior of organic food products.

The research by Chen (2012), on the determinants of consumer buyer behaviour related to the purchase of organic food products in urban China, further indicated that lifestyle significantly influenced the buyer pre-purchase assessment of organic foods. This study, which adopted factor analysis

and Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) in the analysis revealed that the Chinese organic foods consumers tended to be over-indulgent, sought for more variety, liked trying new trendy products and were impulse buyers. Consequently, these consumers were ready to try and enjoy the organic foods beneficial attributes, which include texture, aroma and nutritional value. The study recommended that organic food marketers should put emphasis on the unique organic foods' qualities to the diverse market segments grounded on the Chinese consumers' lifestyle groupings. Research by Dangi, Gupta and Narula (2020), on consumer buying behaviour and buying reasons documented that income of households had a considerable positive association with organic food buying in Australia, Canada and Europe. A research by Onyango *et al.* (2007), on factors driving the buying of organic food products in the United States converged with those of Aertsens *et al.* (2009), Mohammed *et al.* (2012), and Chelang'a *et al.* (2013), who documented that age significantly influenced organic food purchase behavior. However, the findings of Onyango *et al.* (2007), were dissimilar with those of the Chen (2012), study which was contextualized in China and documented that gender and age did not significantly influence organic food purchase. From the reviewed literature, it was hypothesized that: personal factors do not have a statistically significant influence on organic foods buyer behavior in Kenya.

## 2.3 Conceptual Framework

In this study, personal factors were perceived to be the predictors for the weighted scores for the organic foods' buyer behavior. Buyer behavior was measured using primary data and a weighted scores for the same was transformed to be continuous.

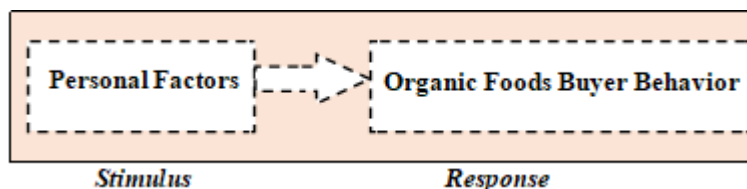


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework for Personal Factors and Organic Foods Buyer Behavior

## 2.4 Study's Gaps

Guided by Howard and Sheth, Veblenian Socio-Psychological theory, Freud's Psycho-analytical model and the Engel-Kollat-Blackwell model, this study carried a comprehensive review of literature on drivers of organic foods buyer behavior. Based on this review, the persuasive inference was that the was scanty literature on the antecedents of organic foods buyer behavior in Kenya. The eminent findings were that there is low consumption of organic foods in Kenya despite the high population and growing disposable income and most of these studies have been conducted in the developed economies of the globe. However, the reviewed studies mostly focused on subjective norms, health consciousness, perceived behaviour control, environmental concerns and attitude constructs and adopted theory of planned behaviour to analyze the organic foods consumption behaviours. The theories of Buyer Behavior have not been adequately tested in preceding

studies on organic foods buyer behavior and precisely in an emerging economy like Kenya.

## 3. Research Methodology

### 3.1 Philosophy, Design and Instrumentation and Data collection

This study adopted a post-positivist research philosophy. This philosophy argue that the ideas, and even the particular identity of a researcher influences what they observe and therefore impacts upon what they conclude in a study. The paradigm commonly adopts an inferential approach and a deductive logic as the guiding tenet. The target population of the study was six thousand, one hundred and thirty organic foods buyers from which a proportionate sample of 376 was statistically determined and selected. Primary data was collected using a semi- structured and predesigned

questionnaire. Instrumentation for personal factors was based on opinion, belief and an attitude of the specific organic foods buyer (s). A drop and pick method was used as data collection method. As such, a five-point ordinal scaled tool was used with the equivalences of strongly disagree (1) on one side with a scale and strongly agree (5) on the other extreme side of the scale (Saunders and Thornhill (2007). The study utilized the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21 in data analysis process. The rationale was that this tool has a wide spectrum of capabilities and options for statistical analyses and presentations (Porter & Gujarat, 2009); Malhotra & Dash, 2016).

### 3.2 Consistency and Validity of Instrumentation

**Table 1:** Consistency Test and Numerical Construct Validity Test Results

| Variable                | Degree of Freedom | KMO  | Number of Items | Cronbach Alpha Coefficient | Decision                                 |
|-------------------------|-------------------|------|-----------------|----------------------------|--|
| Reliability test        | -                 | -    | 08              | 0.712                      | <i>Acceptable Consistency level</i>      |
| Construct validity test | 28                | .754 | 08              | -                          | <i>Adequate Construct Validity level</i> |

### 3.3 Data Analysis and Presentation of Results

Descriptive analysis, test of regression assumptions and then inferential analysis were carried out in that sequence to arrive at the conclusion of the study. Hypothesis testing was done using bivariate linear regression model. Model R-Square, ANOVA statistics (F Statistic and associated p-value) and regression coefficients (Beta and associated p-value) were generated and interpreted. The equation used in this study was in the form;  $Y/\text{Buyer behavior} = \alpha + \beta_1 + \epsilon$ ; where buyer behavior (BB) is (response variable) and  $\beta_1$  is personal factors (stimulus variable). This equation is supported by Garson, 2012.

## 4. Findings & Discussions

### 4.1 Response Rate

**Table 2:** Response Rate

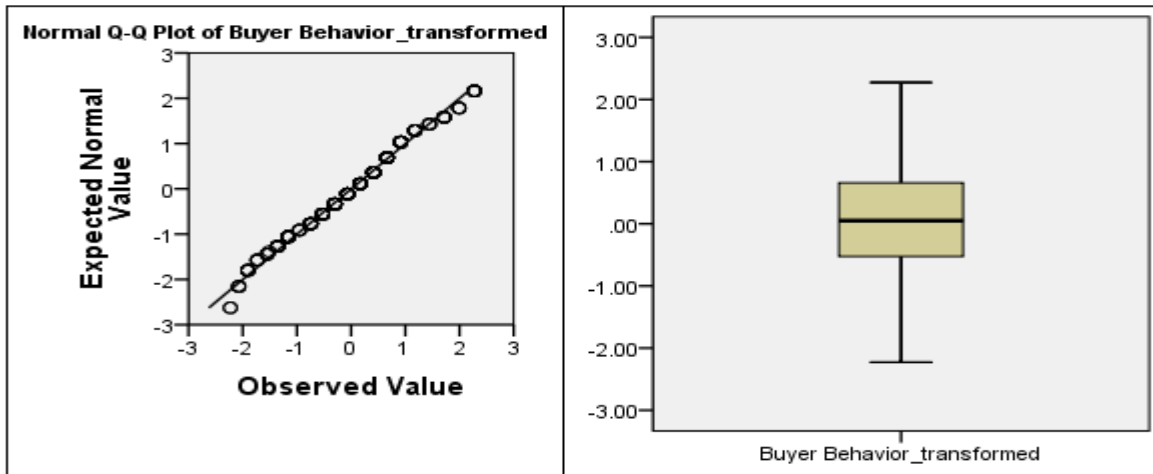
| Establishment          | Questionnaires Distributed | Questionnaires Returned | Response Rate (%) |
|------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------|
| Farmers Market Vendors | 105                        | 73                      | 69.5              |
| Supermarkets           | 34                         | 25                      | 73.5              |
| Green Groceries        | 184                        | 140                     | 76.1              |
| Basket Schemes         | 23                         | 17                      | 73.9              |
| Hotels and Catering    | 30                         | 23                      | 76.7              |
| <b>Total</b>           | <b>376</b>                 | <b>278</b>              | <b>73.9</b>       |

The test of stability of the data collection instrument was carried out using Cronbach Alpha Coefficient and the same is presented in Table 1. The results in this Table show that reliability of this construct was 0.712. Zikmund, Babin, Griffin and Carr (2010), and Cooper and Schindler (2013), pointed that a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.7 and above is acceptable for a variable in a social study. The results further show that the Kaise-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) coefficient was 0.754 which was greater than a coefficient of 0.5 and hence confirming adequate level of numerical test of construct validity among the eight (8) constructs measuring personal factors.

The results in Table 2 show that out of the three hundred and seventy-six (376) questionnaires distributed to the respondents (Organic foods buyers), two hundred and seventy-eight (278) were filled and returned for analysis. The different categories and stratus of the respondents, that is farmers market vendor, supermarkets, green groceries, basket schemes, hotels and catering were adequately represented in the overall response rate of 73.9%. Baruch and Holtom (2008), Saunders & Lewis (2012), asserted that a response rate of 70% is regarded as very good for descriptive research and also for mixed research design.

### 4.2 Test of Regression Assumptions

Statistics literature point that before data analysis is done, it is important to assess a number of statistical assumptions about the distribution of the dependent variable and the properties of the variables in general. The first carried out in this study was the Gaussian distribution test. Buyer behavior measures were subjected to normality test using Q-Q plot and the test of outliers using Box plot. The preliminary evaluation indicated that the data was not normality distributed and had several outliers. To address this shortcoming in distribution, the data was subjected to a Box-Cox statistical transformation. The final results are presented in Figure 2.



**Figure 2:** Normal Q-Q Plot and Box Plot for Box-Cox Transformed Scores for Organic Foods Buyer Behavior

The Figure shows that the Q-Q plot is cumulatively along the diagonal line from point (-3, -3) point (+3, +3) and hence the measure for buyer behavior was confirmed to be normally distributed. Similarly, Box and Whisker plot indicates that the median of the interquartile range of the spread is about the middle of the Box and the associated whiskers are also about the same size on both sides of the box, meaning that the distribution is quite symmetric and hence no outliers. The second test carried out was the test of independence for personal factors and was done using Durbin-Watson *d* statistics. A *d*-statistic of 1.677 was extracted, well within the range of 1.5 and 2.5 for an acceptable level of no autocorrelation in a variable measure and hence acceptable. Further, the stimulus (personal factors) and the response variable (buyer behavior) were subjected to a linearity test using Pearson's correlation coefficient (*r*). A correlation coefficient of 0.466\* was

generated with a *p*-value of .000, hence confirming a moderate co-movement between personal factors and buyer behavior. Based on these results, bivariate linear model was considered appropriate for testing the study null hypothesis ((Porter & Gujarat, 2009).

### 4.3 Hypothesis Testing Results

The null hypothesis of the study was; *H<sub>01</sub>*: *Personal factors do not have a statistically significant influence on organic foods buyer behavior in Kenya.* To test this, the weighted mean scores of stimulus variable (personal factors) were regressed against weighted measures of the response variable. Model summary, associated ANOVA and regression model coefficients were extracted. The associated output is presented in Table 3.

**Table 3:** Bivariate Linear Regression Output for Personal Factors

| Cultural Factors Model | R     | R <sup>2</sup> | Sums of Squares | F (1,276) | Beta (β) | t      | Sig   |
|------------------------|-------|----------------|-----------------|-----------|----------|--------|-------|
| Model Fitness          | 0.466 | 0.217          |                 |           |          |        |       |
| ANOVA                  |       |                |                 |           |          |        |       |
| Regression             |       |                | 59.278          | 76.561    |          |        | 0.000 |
| Residual               |       |                | 213.694         |           |          |        |       |
| Total                  |       |                | 272.972         |           |          |        |       |
| <b>Coefficients</b>    |       |                |                 |           |          |        |       |
| Constant               |       |                |                 |           | -2.520   | -8.595 | 0.000 |
| Personal Factors       |       |                |                 |           | .721     | 8.750  | 0.000 |

Table 3 shows that the R was 0.466. This implies that personal factors had a moderate correlation with organic foods buyer behavior in Kenya. In addition, the R-Square was 0.217. This implies that stimulus variable accounted for approximately 21.7% of the variation in organic foods buyer behavior in Kenya. The Table further show that F statistic was 76.561 and the associated *p*-value of 0.000 < .05. This implies that the personal factors had a statistically significant influence on organic foods buyer behavior in Kenya at 95% degrees of confidence. Based on these results the null hypothesis (*H<sub>01</sub>*) was rejected and instead confirmed that personal factors have a positive and statistically significant influence on buyer behavior in Kenya. Regression coefficients of the model shows that personal factors had a beta coefficient of 0.721 and associated *p* value of 0.000. This implies that a unit change in personal factors is associated with a .721 change in organic foods buyer

behavior in Kenya. The bivariate linear regression model for the personal factors is therefore;

$$\text{Organic Foods BB} = -2.520 + .721 (\text{Personal Factors})$$

This study's findings had a concurrence with, Aertsens, Verbeke, Mondelaers, and Huylenbroeck (2009), study on personal determinants of consumption of organic foods which revealed a substantial association between age and consumption of organic foods. However, the findings of this research had a divergence from a study by Dangi, Gupta and Narula (2020), on consumer buying behavior and buying reasons for organic food products revealed that in the developed countries of North America and Europe, the relationship between income (economic situation) and the purchase of organic foods was diverse, implying that, organic food purchase in developed countries was largely

influenced by lifestyle concerns, and not by levels of income. The Devi, Singh, and Naz (2015), study on cross cultural food consumption in Fiji, posited that EBM model had two sets of dynamics that influenced buyers, specifically the environmental and personal factors.

## 5. Conclusions and Recommendations

### 5.1 Conclusions

The test of hypothesis results for this study showed that ANOVA- F statistic of 76.561 and related p-value of .000. Informed by these two statistics, the study, infers that the study hypothesis ( $H_01$ ) was is rejected in favor of the alternative hypothesis that, there is a positive and statistically significant influence of personal factors on organic foods buyer behavior in Kenya at 5% level of significance.

### 5.2 Recommendations

This study recommends that in application of the broader buyer behavior model in Kenya and specifically the organic foods, personal messaging can be used in the marketing of these organic foods rather than unfocussed messaging. Attention and regard should be given to personal factors to stimulate buyer behavior notwithstanding that the same should be done under certain economic constraints. Marketing is deemed to be a rational and deliberate endeavor to drive the potential customer interest in a wide range of product offers in the market. Consistency with marketing theory, this study recommends the application of the mix of the different categories of antecedents in the marketing of organic foods in Kenya and with due regard to personal factors and deliberate investment in messaging of personal factors in design of the marketing mix.

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