UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN QUEENSLAND

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Master of Management

Report on consumer behaviour in purchasing of organic food products in Australia

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Abstract

This proposal presents a research program that focuses on the research question: *How and why do consumers make purchase decisions about organic products in Australia?* The question is important because the Australian organic food industry is new but is growing at 20 percent per year. However, there is a lack of marketing strategy and awareness within the industry. This research will extend the knowledge of buying behaviour about organic products by addressing the problem.

The goal of the research is a sound theoretical model of consumer behaviour for organic products that will fill the gaps in the literature and add to the knowledge base for industry, business government and farmers. To begin, the report examines the literature about the Australian organic industry showing the size and importance of the industry. It also reveals consumer confusion as to what really is 'organic'. Following the review of this literature, the first research issue was developed.

R1 1: How do consumers in Australia identify organic food?

Next, internal factors affecting the purchase decision are examined. The second research issue developed from a review of this literature.

RI 2: What internal factors influence the purchase decisions of Australian consumers to buy organic products?

Finally the review explores the process and explains the theory relating to how consumers come to decisions when purchasing organic products. Research issue three develops from this review.

RI 3: What is the purchase decision structure consumers use when purchasing organic products in Australia?

References are made to green consumer behaviour and "environmental behaviour" throughout this review, where they exist.

The *methodology* used is four focus groups to assist in discovering new ideas, diagnosing situations and screening alternatives. Focus groups generate insights into complex behaviours and motivations and will be useful for the exploratory and

developmental nature of the research. Two of the groups were people with low organic consumption experience while two groups included those with a high organic consumption experience.

The *findings* of the research determine how consumers identify organic products and showed factors that influence their purchase decision. As well, a model of the purchase decision structure for consumers regarding organic products, links the literature to theoretical knowledge of consumer behaviour.

This report *contributes* to organic marketing through the development of a theoretical framework that will improve the understanding of management implications and give guidelines to the industry. However, this report is an analytic generalisation and a survey is needed for statistical generalisation of the findings. Moreover, further research needs to examine the external factors influencing the consumer purchase decisions towards organic products in Australia would extend the parameters of this report and add to future knowledge of organic marketing.

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Abbreviations

AQIS	**Australian Quarantine Inspection Service**
BDAA	**Bio-dynamic Agriculture Association**
BDRI	**Bio-dynamic Research Institute**
BDFGA	**Bio-dynamic Farming and Gardening Association**
BFA	**Biological Farmers of Australia**
DPIE	**Department of Primary Industries and Energy**
NASAA	**National Association for Sustainable Agriculture, Australia.**
OFC	**Organic Food Chain**
OHGA	**Organic Herb Growers of Australia**
OPAC	**Organic Produce Advisory Committee**
ORGAA	**The Organic Retailers and Growers of Australia**
OVAA	**The Organic Vignerons Association of Australia**
R &D	**Research and development**
RIRDC	**Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation**
TOP	**Tasmanian Organic/Dynamic Producers**

1 Introduction

1.1 Background to the research

Currently, organic food markets in Australia are small niche markets - organic products in the domestic market represent only 0.2 percent of total retail sales of food (Twyford-Jones and Doolan 1998). This small percentage is related to the less than 2 percent of all Australian agricultural land that is organically farmed (Twyford-Jones and Doolan 1998). Indeed, sales from organic food in the Australian market are only about $120 million and just $30 million of this comes from exports even though global markets in organic food are growing rapidly (Twyford-Jones and Doolan 1998).

Broadly defined, organic production is a system that contributes to healthy soils and/or people. It does not use synthetic chemicals, but rather promotes enhanced biological activity and encourages sustainability (Core and Colquhoun 1999). Despite these acceptable characteristics, very little R & D has been or is currently being undertaken by the organic industry. There is limited government funding for research available at present to the industry, and there is no formal communication or representative structures to directly access support for it (Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation 1998).

Some of the sparse research has identified that there are a number of industry characteristics that have influenced the poor market access of organic products: product recognition, quality and quantity assurance, food safety, the pricing of organic products, consumer confusion over logos, consumer demand, and fragmentation of the industry (Dumaresq and Greene 1997). These issues could impede the market access of organic products by influencing the behaviour of organic consumers and creating significant challenges for Australian organic producers (Dumaresq, Greene and van Kerkhoff 1996). Thus consumer behaviour research about organic food is required. In brief, the organic food industry has potential, but is small, under researched and disorganised.

1.2 The research problem, research issues and contributions

Therefore, the purpose of this research is to examine the current market of the organic industry and determine the internal factors influencing consumer organic buying decisions in Australia. Thus this research will address the question: *'How and why do consumers make purchase decisions about organic products in Australia?'* That is, the proposed research focuses on the area of consumer behaviour because knowing how consumers respond in their daily buying decisions is the first step to allowing marketers to adjust response stimuli and obtain a competitive advantage (Hawkins et al. 1994). The focus of this research will be three core Australian consumer behaviour research issues to help answer the research question (based on Kotler, Armstrong, Brown and Adams 1998). These three research issues are related to a theoretical framework about the consumer buying decision process and internal factors influencing consumer behaviour that is developed in chapter 2. This framework was adapted from Schiffman et al. (1997) and is shown in more detail in section 2.10.

In Australia, consumers are becoming frustrated at the lack of coordination from growers, fluctuations in supply of products and price disadvantages and do not appreciate the benefits of organic produced (Coutis and Ross 1997). Consumers are generally have a poor understanding of what constitutes organic food (Hall 1997). Thus the first research issue is identified in the literature synthesis described in chapter 2 is:

RI 1: *How do consumers in Australia identify organic products?*

Furthermore, a review of the literature relating to the internal factors influencing consumers in the consumer buying decision process revealed there was no information about Australian organic consumer behaviour. The literature provides little assistance in determining which factors are important. It became clear that literature from other countries would not solve the problem

as this literature does not relate to the Australian consumer. Thus the second research issue is also developed in chapter 2:

RI 2: *What internal factors influence the purchase decisions of Australian consumers to buy organic products?*

In turn, the literature provides no information about consumer buying decision process in Australia toward organic food. Each consumer's experience is unique and people are not always rational information processors or decision makers (Statt 1997). Literature from other countries and theory about the buying decision process reveals little is known about the consumer buying decisions toward organic food in Australia. Thus the third research issue is also developed in chapter 2:

RI 3: *What is the purchase decision structure consumers use when purchasing organic products in Australia?*

In brief, the above three research issues identified from the literature in chapter 2 have been used to direct the focus of the data collection and analysis and thus assisted in answering the research problem.

Contributions. This research will focus on how and why consumers buy organic foods. This report makes a contribution to organic marketing thought through the development of a new theoretical framework of consumer behaviour towards organic products in Australia (section 2.7). These contributions cover:

- what variables should be considered,
- how important these variables are to the consumer, and
- how the purchase decision is made.

This research will develop an understanding of consumer needs and wants and demands towards organic products.

Moreover, this research improves understanding of management implications through providing guidelines to the industry by:

- indicating what factors are important to the consumer as a basis for marketing programs;

- indicating quality requirements and pricing standards expected by the consumer;
- indicating areas of consumer confusion and how they can be rectified; and
- encourage government support through increased market knowledge.

1.3 Justification for this research

How and why consumers make purchase decisions about organic products in Australia is worthy of this academic research on four grounds: gaps in the literature, the potential size and importance of the industry, the benefits of outcomes, and the unusual methodology used. Each of these grounds is discussed next.

Gaps in the literature. There is a lack of marketing strategy and awareness within the organic industry (Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation 1998), and there are difficulties in obtaining information about virtually all aspects of the industry, especially consumer behaviour information - 'of the little targeted research done in Australia in the organic industry, little has been directed towards the off farm processes' (Dumaresq, Greene and van Kerkhoff 1996, p. 79).

Furthermore, consumer demand appears to be constantly frustrated by poor quality, intermittent supply, large price premiums, and a confusing range of logo and certification marks (Twyford-Jones and Doolan 1998). Thus market inefficiencies and demands need to be identified, market and product quality need to be improved, and there should be increase in the availability of information and consumer awareness (Dumaresq, Green and van Kerkhoff 1996). Indeed, consumers found fewer products available in 1996 than there were five years before (Dumaresq and Green 1997).

That is, there are gaps in the knowledge about consumer demand for organic products in Australia. Indeed, although recent studies have been undertaken on exporting organic vegetables to Asia and the European Union (Larkin and

Shannon 1999) and the expansion of the organic industry in New Zealand (Saunders 1999), no studies have been undertaken on organic consumer behaviour in Australia (section 2.7). In brief, there is a real gap about consumer behaviour towards organic products in Australia (Dumaresq and Green 1997). Previous studies and the gaps they have left are discussed in more detail in chapter 2.

Potential size and importance of industry. Domestic and overseas market for Australian organic products were estimated to be worth only $120 million in 1997, however, the potential market is more than A$200 million (Twyford-Jones and Doolan 1998; section 2.3). Indeed, the global market for organic products is expected to exceed US$11 billion by the year 2000 (Twyford-Jones and Doolan 1998) and is growing at 20 percent per year (Coutis and Ross 1999).

This smallness of the Australian industry makes it vulnerable to trade and seasonal cycles. With few producers of any one product, the industry is unable to provide the constancy of supply and quality that the consumers require. Thus it is difficult for processors and others to make serious investment commitments to the industry (Dumaresq, Green, and van Kerkhoff 1996). If the industry is to develop, it must be accepted by the mainstream of Australian farmers and consumers as being of benefit to both (Twyford-Jones and Doolan 1998). This gap has been identified in a National Conference on Organic Agriculture in 1996 (Dumaresq, Green and van Kerkhoff 1996).

Further justification for this research is that because the industry is small and fragmented, there is a lack of marketing strategy/awareness in the organic industry in Australia (Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation 1998). Retailers' interests are focused on continuity of supply, consumer confidence, and certification standards and there is a lack of professionalism in marketing within the industry (Dumaresq, Green, and van Kerkhoff 1996). Furthermore, the industry is fragmented at all levels, from farming, processing, and marketing, to industry coordination and policy making (Dumaresq and Green 1997). Government involvement has not been strong at any level and

although the industry has become goal orientated, it is restricted by funding constraints (Dumaresq and Green 1997). Finally, those producers wanting to join the industry perceive it to be somewhat exclusive (Dumaresq and Green 1997). In brief, there are deficiencies inhibiting the development of the organic food industry's potential size and importance.

Benefits of outcomes. The third justification for this research is that this study will provide information which will assist the industry and farmers to offer the greatest opportunities though a better understanding of consumer needs and wants. This information is provided in section 5.5.

Unusual methodology used. Finally, this research will be the first study undertaken in Australia which examines the literature on organic consumers and uses focus groups to understand the organic consumer (Juric, B. 2000, pers.comm. with C. Perry 21 March). Focus groups with consumers will be used to collect preliminary information, allowing flexibility and group interaction, whilst examining the behaviour of organic consumers (Carson et al. 2000). Thus this methodology allows new perspective's to be developed about the research problem.

1.4 Methodology

This section briefly outlines the methodology used in this review and more details are provided in chapter 3. Two types of data were used. Secondary data was collected specifically for this research through electronic library databases (such as EBSCO Host and Emerald), academic research papers, industry journals and books and a full literature review was conducted.

Then primary data was gathered through focus groups. This method of focus groups allowed complex behaviours and motivations to be revealed because of the interaction of the groups - 'The use of the group interaction produces data and insights that would be less accessible without the interaction found in a group' (Morgan 1988, p. 12). That is, the goal in focus groups is to gain insight

and understanding by hearing from people in depth (Morgan 1998) and the non probability sampling technique of *purposeful* sampling allowed the groups to be selected to satisfy the particular objectives (Greenbaum 1993). The groups chosen were as homogenous as possible to minimise negative effects on group dynamics or quality of information. In this research groups consisted of people with low and high consumption experience with organic food. Participants for high organic consumption levels were recruited with the assistance of the Organic Growers Association in Toowoomba and members of the Sunshine Coast Environment Council. Low organic consumption level consumers were recruited from consumers who had experienced purchasing organic products but did not do so on a weekly basis.

Data analysis. Analysis and interpretation of focus group data require as much judgement and care just as other scientific approaches (Stewart and Shamdasani 1990). This section discusses the content analysis and complete details are found in chapter 3 and 4.

The framework developed in chapter 2 provided an outline for ordering and compounding the focus group data (Husserl 1952). A start list of codes were developed from the conceptual framework prior to conducting focus groups (Carson et al. 2000). The transcription of the session enabled the researcher to scan the comments and develop the coding system, adding to the codes if necessary and coding each comment into the appropriate category. This was a combination of two methods: firstly a list developed from the framework, and another method known as open coding (Neuman 1994).

The researcher who moderated the groups analysed the research. This was justified on the basis of the researcher having a better 'feel' for the data than an external analyst could (Carson et al. 2000). Given the qualitative nature of the data, a considerable amount of subjective judgement is involved in the interpretation and analysis (Knodel 1993). When the coding was completed, the researcher made summary statements regarding the categories. As noted, more details of these methodological procedures are provided in chapter 3.

1.5 Outline of this report

This report has five chapters. Firstly this report will provide justification for the study in chapter 1. Then the literature about the parent discipline of consumer behaviour will be discussed, along with internal factors that influence the organic consumer in chapter 2. The parent discipline of the literature review will be *consumer behaviour*. The history of consumer behaviour research goes back thirty years and has been conducted in a discipline-orientated way, predominantly in the footsteps of psychological research (Wagner 1997). This body of knowledge has been defined comprehensively to include all processes involved in consumption - it is 'the acquisition, consumption, and disposition of goods, services, time and ideas by decision-making units' (Jacoby 1976, p. 334).

After this parent discipline, my review of the literature focuses on the *immediate discipline* of how and why consumers make purchase decisions about organic products in Australia (Perry 1998). Firstly, the organic industry is examined to determine the state of the industry in Australia and consumer confusion problems in the industry are exposed.

Within the immediate discipline, a theoretical framework is developed to focus data collection and analysis on the gaps in the literature. This review has concentrated on the impact of internal factors on the buying decisions of the organic consumer. Next, the study examines *the internal factors* influencing the decisions of consumers towards organic food: cultural, social, psychological and personal (Kotler et al. 1998). Although social, personal and cultural factors are initially external influencing factors, these non-marketing socio-cultural influences, when internalised, affect the consumer's purchase decisions (Schiffman et al. 1997). These factors are shown in figure 2.2 of chapter 2. Consumers coming from the same culture, social class and occupation might have quite different lifestyles and personal factors. These differences influence the individual consumers needs and attitudes and therefore purchase and use behaviour (Hawkins et al. 1994).

Then the influences of five major psychological factors on consumer buying choices are examined - motivation, perception, learning, beliefs and attitudes and personality (Kotler et al. 1998). These factors cannot be controlled by the marketer and will determine individual consumer behaviour (Kotler et al. 1998) toward organic products.

Lastly the *process of buyer decision* is examined, as shown in the right column of figure 2.2. It considers the process a consumer goes through in information gathering activities, evaluation of alternatives, and product choice once they recognise they have a problem or need for a product. This is illustrated in the right hand column of Figure 2.2. Moreover, this process takes into account how individual consumers are influenced by their internal factors when making a purchase decision (Wagner 1997).

In brief, addressing the three core research issues will determine buyer behaviour of organic consumers by understanding how consumers identify organic products, which factors are of importance when purchasing organic products, and which process is more commonly undertaken when making the purchase decision.

Next, data sources will be described in chapter 3, including how data is collected using these focus groups. Aspects of this qualitative methodology are justified including the focus group size, participants planned, length of the session and moderator details. Chapter 4 describes and analyses the outcome of the focus group discussions by describing the participants who attend the focus groups and the arrangements that are organised. Then the focus group data is gathered and interpreted and all interview questions examined. Finally, chapter 5 will interpret the research findings and their implications. Conclusions about the research issues and the research problem are discussed along with implications and limitations.

1.6 Definitions

Definitions form the basis of data collection procedures (Perry 1998). Definitions adopted by researchers are often not uniform, so key and controversial terms are defined to establish the position taken in this research. The definitions are in alphabetical order.

Certification means the procedures by which an approved certifying organisation provides written assurance that an operator has been determined to conform with the National Standard for organic produce. Certification is based on the inspection of practices used, sampling of product and verification of records maintained by the operator (OPAC 1992). Justification for this definition is in chapter 2.

A *consumer* is a term used to describe two different kinds of consuming entities: *personal consumers* (who buy goods and services for their own use or for household use); and *organisational consumers* (who buy products, equipment and services in order to run their organisation (Schiffman et al. 1997). Because this research focuses on the organic food industry and the individual behavioural aspects, the consumer examined is in this case the personal consumer.

The term *culture* is the sum total of learned beliefs, values and customs that serve to regulate the consumer behaviour of member of a particular society (Kotler et al. 1994). Justification for this definition is in chapter 2, section 2.8.

The term *environmentally conscious consumer* relates to a consumer whose behaviour reflects concern about the effects of production methods and consumption on the natural environment (Wagner 1997). This definition incorporates the 'green consumer' because their behaviours are similar (Wagner 1997). Justification for this definition is in chapter 2 section 2.7.

The term *organic* for this research is developed and justified in section 2.2. That definition is: produced in soils of enhanced biological activity, determined by the humus level, crumb structure and feeder foot development, such plants are fed through the *soil ecosystem and not primarily through soluble fertilisers* added

to the soil. Plants grown in such systems take up essential soluble salts that are released slowly from humus colloids, at a rate governed by warmth. In this system, the metabolism of the plant and its ability to assimilate nutrients is not over stretched by excessive uptake of soluble salts in the soil water (such as nitrates). Organic *farming systems* rely to the maximum extent feasible upon crop rotations, crop residues, animal manures, legumes, green manures, mechanical cultivation, approved mineral-bearing rocks and aspects of biological pest control to maintain soil productivity and tilth, to supply plant nutrients and to control insects, weeds and other pests. (OPAC 1992)(emphasis added).

The term *personality* is the inner psychological characteristics that both determine and reflect how people respond to their environment (Kotler et al. 1994). Justification for this definition is in section 2.9.

The term *psychographic characteristics* is the intrinsic psychological, socio-cultural and behavioural characteristics that reflect how an individual is likely to act in relation to consumption decisions (Schiffman et al. 1997). Justification for this definition is in section 2.9.

The term *role* is a pattern of behaviour expected of an individual in a specific social position, such as the role of mother, daughter, or teacher. One person may have a number of roles, each of which is relevant in the context of a specific social situation (Schiffman et al. 1997). Justification for this definition is in chapter 2.8.

1.7 Delimitations of scope and key assumptions

This paper focuses on the behaviour of consumers of organic food *in Australia* only. Although studies have been undertaken regarding the export organic vegetables to East Asia and the European Union (Lakin and Shannon 1999), and the potential for expansion of organic industry in New Zealand (Saunders 1999), this Australian only research is justified because no study has examined the consumer behaviour of organic consumers from an Australian cultural perspective. Legislation in Australia is different to overseas countries and

regulations and development of this organic industry is at a different stage of market development (Wagner 1997).

The Australian consumer is also influenced by many core values that affect and reflect the character of Australian society (Schiffman et al. 1997). By examining the specific values of the Australian consumer, marketers can understand the consumer actions of the Australian people (Schiffman et al. 1997). Some reflections about how the Australian findings are related to those in other countries, are provided in Chapter 5.

The goal of the research is to develop an understanding of the issues regarding consumer behaviour toward organic products in Australia taking the Australian internal factors into account. That is, the review examines the individual Australian consumer and the factors that have been internalised that influence buying decisions. Further research would be required if conclusions and implications derived from this study are to be applied to external influencing factors.

This research has also focused on products defined as 'organic' (section 2.2). Biodynamic products, green products, or products that have been genetically modified are not examined in this research because they do not fit the definition of organic developed in section 2.2, and because they relate to other methods of farming (Wagner 1997).

1.8 Conclusions

This chapter has laid the foundations for the review. The research problem and research issues were introduced along with the important theoretical and practical implications. The gaps in the literature were identified and then the research was justified. The methodology was briefly examined and justified and the review outlined along with its delimitiations.

Based on these foundations the review can proceed with a detailed description of the research in the following chapters. Chapter 2 begins by discussing the literature on the organic industry and the related consumer behaviour factors.

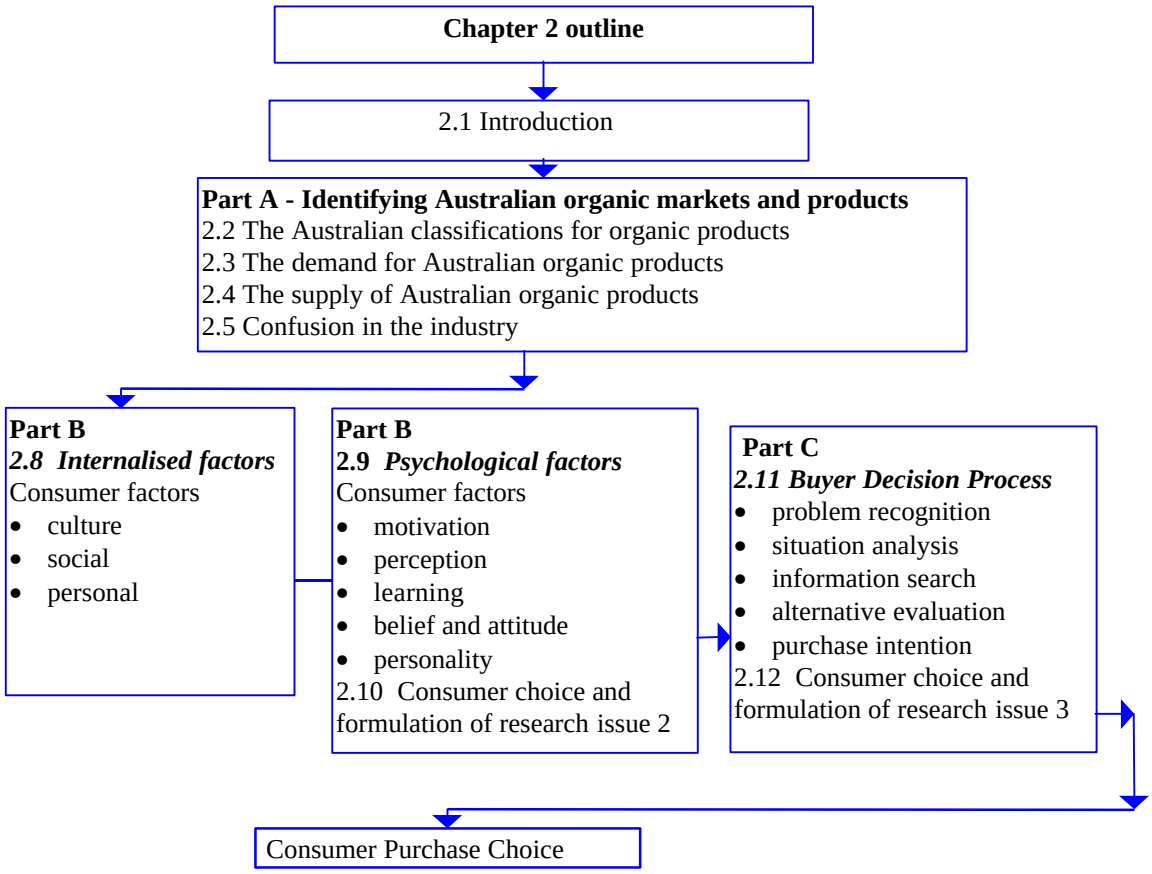
2 Research issues

2.1 Introduction

This chapter builds a theoretical foundation upon which the data collection and analysis of this research will be based. That is, extant literature is reviewed in order to identify worthy research issues that need to be addressed. This chapter is divided into the three sections outlined in figure 2.1. Part A is a review of current literature relating to the industry which addresses the Australian context of the industry and how there is confusion in the industry which leads to consumer problems identifying organic products. Literature relating to the green consumer is also examined. There are external factors that initially influence the consumer in their decisions, however these

factors become internalised within each consumer and become part of their psychological and personal structure.

Figure 2.1 Chapter 2 outline with section numbers noted



These individually selected internalised factors are examined in part B: culture, social, personal, and psychological factors which form the person making the buying decision. Finally, part C reviews theory and literature on the consumer buying decision process. In brief, this review develops a new theoretical framework which will explain consumer behaviour towards organic products in Australia.

Part A Identifying Australian organic markets and products

2.2 The Australian classifications for organic products

A set of national export standards for Australian organic produce was produced by the Organic Producers Advisory Council (OPAC) in 1992. As well, a definition was produced to avoid the many conflicting and controversial definitions and descriptions

of organic and related forms of agriculture that existed (Dumaresq and Green 1997). This definition thoroughly describes 'organic' as farm output produced using appropriate land management practices without using artificial fertilisers, growth regulator, herbicides, or pesticides. That is, the OPAC emphasises these two core issues in its definition of organic as (OPAC 1992, p. 7)(emphases added):

> produced in soils of enhanced biological activity, determined by the humus level, crumb structure and feeder foot development, such plants are fed through the *soil ecosystem and not primarily through soluble fertilisers* added to the soil. Plants grown in such systems take up essential soluble salts that are released slowly from humus colloids, at a rate governed by warmth. In this system, the metabolism of the plant and its ability to assimilate nutrients is not over stretched by excessive uptake of soluble salts in the soil water (such as nitrates). Organic *farming systems* rely to the maximum extent feasible upon crop rotations, crop residues, animal manures, legumes, green manures, mechanical cultivation, approved mineral-bearing rocks and aspects of biological pest control to maintain soil productivity and tilth, to supply plant nutrients and to control insects, weeds and other pests.

This definition is comprehensive about the term 'organic' but does not describe the types of products produced. These are defined next.

Australian organic products defined. So what are the products produced in these organic processes? Organic agriculture in Australia produces a range of commodities. The main ones are livestock for meat, milk products and wool, fruit of most varieties - including exotic and tropical species, dry land and irrigated cereals - mainly wheat, oats and rice, and vegetables of all sorts. Lesser areas of production include cotton, oil, seeds, grain, legumes, nuts, herbs, condiments, sugar, and some beverage production such as tea. (Dumaresq and Green 1997). Total volume is small compared with conventional production because only about 0.2 percent of total food sales in Australia are of organic products (Dumaresq and Green 1997). In particular, the main organic products in

the fresh produce area are oranges, apples, bananas, potatoes, grapes, carrots, avocados and broccoli (Hassall and Associates 1996). The question as to whether these products relate to the Australian diet requires an examination of the current Australian food culture.

The Australian diet. The range of organic commodities reflect changes in the Australian diet. Australians are shaking off 'the British heritage and a new Australian food culture has emerged' (Bannerman 1998, p.84). National cuisine of the 1990s and 2000 is a blend of Asian foods and techniques along with the more familiar European food and cooking techniques (Bannerman 1998). When asked to evaluate this diet, only 37 percent of Australians believe it could be somewhat healthier. Nevertheless, 90 percent of Australians are very or somewhat concerned about the nutritional content of the food they eat, with 59 percent very concerned (Food Marketing Institute 1992). Moreover, almost all Australians claim to have made some dietary changes as a result of health and nutritional concerns (Stanton 1999). To ensure a healthy diet, Australian shoppers mostly report eating more fruits and vegetables (Food Marketing Institute 1992). These figures emphasise the high profile nutrition has in food selection.

In turn, Australians rely on themselves as individuals to ensure the safety of the products they buy with only 6 percent relying on the Australian government to ensure product safety. They are completely or mostly confident the food is safe, for example, 79 percent are confident of the safety of food in supermarkets. Australians perceive the greatest threat to food safety to be pesticides, residues, insecticides and herbicides (Food Marketing Institute 1992).

However, these high safety figures do not lead to a high consumer demand for organic products in Australia. In fact, there is a low demand for organic products in Australia (section 2.3). Although many impediments to the Australian industry development have been noted above, the focus has not been on the consumer needs and wants. The focus in Australia has been on the organic production processes and industry rather than the customer requirements. Thus this research focuses on how and why consumers make purchase decisions about organic

products in Australia. Moreover, the focus is on the internal factors influencing the decisions of the individual consumer. However, a basis for understanding these factors is the demand for organic products.

2.3 The demand for Australian organic products

As background to examining the market demand in Australia, demand in overseas markets needs to be determined. The market demand for organic products in other countries varies by regions. Firstly, there are major markets in *highly developed countries* such as Europe, the United States, Japan and New Zealand, with the United States and New Zealand having developed significant exports of organic products (Twyford Jones and Doolan 1998). For example, within Europe, Germany and the Scandinavian countries have well developed markets and are highly dependent on imported organic products. These developed markets are very different to the market in the United Kingdom where the retail value of organic food sales was valued at $975 million in

1998-1999 period of which 70 percent is imported (Department of Primary Industries 2000).

Secondly, the market for organic products is less significant in the *emerging economies* of East Asia and their lack of regulations casts doubt on the reliability of products considered organic (Twyford Jones and Doolan 1998). Next, in *China* there is a major focus on 'green' food and although it is unclear to what extent their 'green' food should be classified as organic, there is some emphasis on environmental and health issues. Their market demand is currently being met by domestic production however if they continue to develop, they could represent a major competitor in other countries such as Japan (Twyford Jones and Doolan 1998).

In turn, the organic industry in *Australia* is at a critical point in its development and is examined next. The organic industry in Australia has relatively small domestic markets estimated to be worth $90 million in 1996, with an additional $30 million of exports (Twyford-Jones and Doolan 1998) but it is growing. It is

likely that the market in the year 2000, including exports, will be over $200 million (Twyford-Jones and Doolan 1998) as noted in section 2.4. In 1990, the market was $28 million per annum and the average expenditure on retail food sales were estimated to be $0.05 per head per week, or 0.13 per cent of total retail food sales, as seen in the estimated expenditures in table 2.1 (Hassall and Associates 1990). Within five years the market had grown by 150 percent to a total $80.5 million as seen in the estimated 1995 retail sales in table 2.2. Average expenditure had almost doubled to $A0.09 per head per week or 0.02 percent of total retail food sales.

Table 2.1
Summary of estimated expenditure on organic food in Australian capital cities, 1990

	Sydney Newcastle &W'gong	**Melbourne and Geelong**	**South East Queensland**	**Perth**	**Adelaide**	**Tasmania**	**Canberra**	**Total**	**Percent**
	$ Million per annum								
Fruit and vegetables	5.36	7.30	2.45	1.02	1.15	0.33	0.64	18.26	64.65
Wholefoods	2.32	3.19	0.47	0.31	0.43	0.25	0.15	7.16	25.35
Other organic	0.82	0.90	0.34	0.56	0.18	0.05	0.03	2.83	10.00
Total organic[1]	8.50	11.39	3.26	1.89	1.76	0.63	0.82	28.24	100
Total all types[2]	8759	5667	2985	1857	1737	299	421	21723	
	%								
Organic as proportion of total	0.10	0.20	0.11	0.10	0.10	0.20	0.20	0.13	
	million								
Population[3]	4.25	3.15	1.76	1.12	1.02	0.18	0.30	12.05	
	$								
Expenditure per head per week	0.04	0.07	0.03	0.03	0.03	0.03	0.05	0.05	

Note: Figures are rounded so totals may not add up.
(1) Estimates of Hassall survey of industry operators. (2) Total 1988/1989 retail food expenditure for each state adjusted to selected survey coverage by proportion of state population in selected markets (3) Resident population estimates in June 1989.
Source: Adapted from Hassall and Associates (1990).

Table 2.2
Composition of organic industry retail sales 1995
($A million)

PRODUCT GROUPING	QLD	NSW	ACT	VIC	TAS	SA	WA	Total	Percentage of market
Livestock products	0.3	5.3	0.06	1.2	0.02	0.2	0.4	7.48	9.29
Seeds/grains/ cereals	3.2	1.4	0.36	3.1	0.28	0.9	1.2	10.44	12.97
Fruits/nuts	4.9	7.9	0.39	11.4	0.35	1.3	1.2	27.44	34.09
Vegetables/ herbs	6.1	6.7	0.32	11.4	0.24	1.7	1.6	28.06	34.86
Tree products including natural oils	0	2.2	0	0.3	0.01	0	0	2.51	3.11
Other	0	0.5	0.07	3.4	0.10	0.3	0.2	4.57	5.67
Total organic	14.5	24.0	1.2	30.8	0.99	4.4	4.6	80.49	100

Source: Adapted from Hassall and Associates (1996).

Incidentally, market demand is not being met by Australian *domestic* producers because many of the organic products sold in Australia are imported (Dumaresq 1997). Indeed, the current limited production is a major barrier to further development of the Australian organic industry. Potential markets for this Australian organic food industry are emerging worldwide primarily as a response to consumer concerns about food health and safety and a community desire for sustainable food production and farming systems (Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation 1998). If domestic production remains limited, the Australian organic industry will miss out.

2.4 The supply of Australian organic products

The *demand* in Australia was discussed above. In turn, consider the *supply* of organic products to this Australian market. Only 336,000 hectares of all Australian agricultural land was being organically farmed in 1995 (according to the latest actual figures available - projections for 2000 and 2005 are in table 2.3). This area was only about 1 to 2 percent of farmed land in Australia but had nearly doubled since 1990. Approximately 75 percent of these organic farmers are in the horticulture industry and only 12 percent and 10 percent are in the broadacre and livestock industries respectively. These farmers use different amount of land with horticulture accounting for only 8 percent, the broadacre industries account for as much as 69 percent of the total organic area with livestock accounting for 17 per cent. The characteristics of the organic farming industry and projections regarding organic farm sizes to the year 2005 are shown in table 2.3. The total number of farmers are decreasing while the area being farmed is expected to continue to increase by 50 percent over each five year period. Nevertheless, the organic producers will only constitute 1.9 percent of all producers by the year 2005. (Hassall and Associates 1996).

Table 2.3
Characteristics of the organic farming industry and projection to 2005

	1990	1995	2000	2005
Percent growth		0.2	0.4	0.5
Number of organic producers	991	1429	1657	1920
Organic producers as a percentage of total	0.8	1.0	1.4	1.9
Total number of producers	160,000	137,397	117,988	101,320
Average organic area per farm(ha)	119.4	234.8	329.3	416.8
Average organic farm size	295.5	783.2	1048.1	1402.6
Organic farm area as proportion of total agricultural area (%)	0.3	0.8	1.2	1.9

Source: Adapted from Hassall and Associates (1996)

For growth of off farm areas, the number of certified organic growers had grown 47 percent in five years to 1462 growers in 1995, based on figures from certification organisations (Dumaresq and Green 1997). Not only were these figures increasing but the size of the average organic farm increased by 165 percent in the five years. Organic farms throughout rural Australia with farm areas under organic production vary considerably in size and products from region to region. This very dispersed nature of the industry makes the supply of any large market with particular organic products difficult (Dumaresq and Green 1997).

Moreover, there are a large number of organisations involved in the whole organic industry's value chain and its supporting context. That is, there is a range of enterprises, organisations and government agencies that make up these organisations, as seen in table 2.4. While this high number provides competition for distribution services, it does not necessarily lend itself to consistency - although there are national specifications and minimum standards for both export and domestic markets, different certifiers use different inspection methods and criteria (Neeson 1997).

2.5 Confusion in the industry

The consumer in Australia needs to be assured of the supply to market of the products they require. Thus there are four major impediments to the growth of the Australian industry (Coutis and Ross 1997). Firstly, there is a fragmented approach to matching the growing of organic produce with end markets which often affects the return on investment, as noted in section 2.4. Secondly, processors and consumers are frustrated by fluctuations in supply. Market are being established and lost because of no coordination of growers to ensure the markets. The next impediment is that organic farmers are also at a price disadvantage against conventional counterparts because of the requirements of being an organic grower. Certification is expensive compared to conventional farming costs and this leads to fraudulent sale of uncertified produce (Dumaresq and Green 1997). Finally, the general consumer has little appreciation of the benefits of organic produce and becomes unwilling to pay the higher premiums (Coutis and Ross 1997).

Table 2.4
Australian organic industry organisational landscape

	Production	**R & D**	**Certification**	**Processing**	**Trading**	**Retailing**	**Consumers**
Industry Producers and Processors	Certified growers	Private R & D		Certified Processors Certified manufacturers	Certified wholesalers Certified exporters Certified importers	Certified wholesalers	
Current Relevant Organisations			BDRI BFA* NASAA* OHGA* OVAA* TOP* ORGAA			ORGAA	Australian Consumers Association Consumers Federation of Australia
Others	Uncertified growers BDFGA Grower groups	Independent researchers State Department of Agriculture Federal DPIE R & D Corps	OFC AQIS** OPAC**	Processors Manufacturers	Wholesalers Austrade OBE		General public

* AQIS accredited/undergoing accreditation ** AQIS/OPAC roles yet to be confirmed

Source: Adapted from Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation (1998).

These impediments to growth of the organic industry affect the consumer and so there is considerable consumer confusion within the marketplace for organic foods (Dumaresq and Green 1997). That is, the consumer becomes confused as to what exactly is an organic product. There appear to be three reasons for this confusion (Wynen 1997). Firstly, how can a consumer be sure that the food said to be organic is actually organic? Overseas consumers are guaranteed that what comes out of Australia as organic, is organic. However, it is taking a long time to guarantee Australian consumers that organic is really organic because a large number of growers market organic products without certification (Wynen 1997). Secondly, the multiplicity of logos does not allow the consumer to understand what the logo on the products actually means. The current seven logos (Kinnear 2000) are very difficult for consumers to identify. Lastly there is a lack of information about the products for the consumer. Consumers want to know what organic means when they purchase their organic foods (Wynen 1997).

In brief, consumers generally appear to have a poor understanding of what constitutes organic food (Hall 1997). Consumers are confused by the number of logos and lack of information, nevertheless there is a growing market for organic food. None of the literature specifically addresses the question as to how Australian consumers identify organic products. These gaps lead to the first research issue:

RI 1 How do consumers identify organic products?

Part B - Building customer profiles

2.6 Consumer behaviour theory

Part A examined the current literature relating to the organic food industry. This next section, part B introduces the parent discipline (Perry 1998) of consumer behaviour and aims to build a theoretical foundation to identify the research issues for this research. Firstly, it examines the international studies relating to the internal factors that may influence the consumer in their decision to purchase organic foods. Secondly, it draws from the theory of consumer behaviour to examine the internal influences of culture, social, and personal factors in the Australian perspective. Lastly, theory regarding the four psychological factors of motivation, perception, learning and belief and attitude are discussed in terms of how they relate to consumer decision making. In this process, research issue 2 is established.

2.7 Internal factors influencing the consumer

To weave a coherent picture of factors influencing the consumer in their buying decisions for organic food products, it was important to examine international studies as data relating to studies on organic consumer behaviour in Australia were not available. There are two major patterns in this overseas picture:

- influences on demand,
- the motivation of the environmentally conscious consumer.

Each of these will now be discussed in turn.

Influences on demand. In both Germany and the United Kingdom, consumer surveys indicate the primary reason for purchasing organic food is *concern about health and safety of food* (Booth 1992; Mintel 1995). These reasons are strongly influenced by factors such as age and income. Altruistic motives are also more evident in Germany than in the United Kingdom (Wirthgen 1994) where a willingness to pay a price premium appears to be higher among German

consumers and reflects the longer standing tradition for organic food (Latacz-Lohmann and Foster 1997).

Research on *demand* for organic products have mainly focused on factors that facilitate or hinder the acceptance of organic products and consumer attitudes towards these products (Zotos and Ziamou 1999). These are summarised in table 2.5. Most of these studies relate to the beliefs, attitudes, motivations and personal factors that influence the individual consumer buying behaviour for organic foods.

These studies examined a *range of demand influences* that were shown to impact on choice of organic food items. Included were attributes such as price, quality availability, freshness, taste, nutritional value and physical appearance. The studies showed that these attributes lead to beliefs and attitudes which persuade or dissuade the consumer to make a purchase choice (Ekelund and Froman 1991; Sparks and Shepherd 1992; Thimm, Karst and Schart. 1992).

Table 2.5
Factors that facilitate or hinder the acceptance of organic products or consumer attitudes

Reference	Findings of studies
Nutrition Week 1991	Consumers are sceptical regarding nutritional value of organic goods
Hutchins and Greenhalgh 1997	Consumers are often confused about the meaning of the term 'organic'
Park and Lohr 1996	Consumers often express their need for more information on meaning and certification of organically produced products.
Jolly et al. 1989	Majority of US consumers have a positive attitude toward organic produce. This does not translate to purchasing behaviour.
Grunert and Kristensen 1990	Suggest life values, environmental consciousness, food consciousness and product specific attitudes are most important
Ekelund and Froman 1991; Sparks and Shepherd 1992; Thimm, Karst and Schart 1992	Suggest product attributes such as quality, freshness, taste, nutritional value, physical appearance and price are most important attributes in encouraging consumers to buy organic goods
Homer and Kahle 1988	Found high correlation between consumption of organic food and consumers sensitivity to diet issues in the US.
Grunert and Juhl 1995	Found positive correlation between Danish consumers environmental attitudes and buying frequency of organic products.

Source: Adapted from Zotos and Ziamou (1999).

For example, with regard to *availability* of product, in a survey of 917 housewives, 15 percent of those surveyed said they would always buy organic foods if they were more widely available (Davies, Titterington and Cochrane 1995; Mintel 1991). Other studies suggest life values, environmental consciousness, food consciousness and product specific attitudes are most important (Grunert and Kristensen 1990).

Demographic variables such as age, income, marital status, and number and age of children have also been considered important in helping to explain and predict consumer demand (Thompson 1998). One study found that the consumer segment with the highest propensity to purchase organic food contained a higher than average proportion of people 40 years and over (Hartman Group 1996). Another segment very interested in purchasing organic food but with less

disposable income displayed a higher than average proportion of consumers under 35 years. Selected characteristics of these studies on organic products are summarised in table 2.6. However, findings from these studies differed in terms of their results. For example, at Alaskan Direct Markets, buyers of organic produce tended to be more educated (Swanson and Lewis 1993), but in California there was no statistical difference in education levels between buyers and non buyers of organic produce (Jolly 1991). International studies generally suggest that higher income households were more likely to purchase organic products (Food Marketing Institute 1997; Parkwood Research Associates 1994). Most of these factors relate to motivation and personal factors that influence the individual in their decisions to purchase organic food.

Furthermore, international studies regarding price of product indicate organic food tends to carry a significant *price premium* due to its higher production costs. These higher costs are generally due to the necessity to ensure that residues of artificial fertilisers and pesticides have left the soil, thus ensuring that the products can be marketed as truly ‘organic’. Price of organic food appears to be an

important attribute to many consumers who indicate that they are increasingly concerned about residues in their food (Chryssochoidis 2000; Davies, Titterington and Cochrane 1995; Roddy, Cohen and Hutchinson 1994). One study in 1987 showed that 26 percent of respondents would pay up to 5 percent more for pesticide-free fruits, with this number increasing to 49 per cent two years later (Davies, Titterington and Cochrane 1995).

The motivation of the environmentally conscious consumer. The *environmentally conscious consumer* can hold strong beliefs and attitudes as to the benefits of organic products, and are possibly motivated to seek out organic products which can lead to committed consumer buying behaviour. This motivation is similar to that of the green consumer who appear to be motivated by universal needs as they express their environmental concerns in individual ways. These universal needs translate into new purchasing strategies with

Table 2.6
Studies on organic products in the United States.

Year	Products	Area covered	Purpose	Survey method	Sample Size	Author
1997	Produce	USA	Poll attitude and behaviour	Telephone sample	400,000	The Packer
1997	Produce and other	USA	Identify consumer segments and attitudes	Stratified random telephone sample	1,005	Food Marketing Institute
1996	Earth Sustainable/ Organics	USA	Identify consumer segments and attitudes	Telephone sample	250,000	Hartman Group
1994	Produce	Tucson Arizona	Explain choice of organic products	Questionnaire in Co-op and natural food supermarket	360	Thompson & Kidwell
1994	Produce	USA	Poll attitudes and willingness to pay	Telephone	1,000	Parkwood Research
1992	Produce	Alaska	Distinguish organic buyers vs.non buyers	Mail survey of direct market customers	417	Swanson & Lewis
1987	Produce	California	Distinguish organic buyers vs. Non buyers	Mail	955	Jolly

Source: adapted from Thompson (1998).

profound implications for the way products are developed and marketed. For the purpose of this study environmentally conscious consumers are considered to hold the same motivations toward organic products as green consumers as both groups hold strong beliefs and attitudes toward organic products.

Most studies in this area have looked at demographic variables associated with self-report measures of environmental commitment, behavioural indicators of environmental commitment or psychometric scales measuring environmental consciousness to be important (for example, Samdahl and Robertson 1989; Zimmer, Stafford and Stafford 1994). Such studies would indicate the behavioural patterns of the organic consumer with a strong interest in organic food due to his or her interest in seeking products that are environmentally friendly. In view of this relevance, the environmentally conscious consumer deserves to be examined in more detail.

The environmentally conscious consumer can be defined as those who actively seek out products perceived as having a relatively minimum impact on the environment (Ottman 1992). Women are in the forefront of environmentally conscious consumer behaviour as they are typically the primary shopper and tend to be the influencers of most food purchasing decisions (Davies, Titterington and Cochrane 1995; Ottman 1992). It has been shown that women place significantly higher importance on environmental purchasing criteria than men (Warwick, Baker and Fiore 1990). It is suggested that men are more able to take control in general, and therefore feel less threatened by environmental issues (Ottman 1992). As a result, they do less purchasing of organic products.

While consumers express their environmental concerns in individual ways, environmentally conscious consumers appear to be motivated by four factors. These factors translate into new purchasing strategies with implications for the way products are developed and marketed, as summarised in table 2.7.

Table 2.7

Environmentally conscious consumer psychology and buying strategies as they relate to the Australian Organic Market

	Needs	*Strategies*	*Australian Organic Market*
1.	Information	Read labels	Six labels, little advertising
2.	Control	Take preventive measures	Niche markets, retailers they trust
3.	Make a difference	Switch brands	Support the farmers selling organic
4.	Maintain lifestyle	Buy interchangeable alternatives	Purchasing products with spots and bruises

Source: Adapted from Ottman Consulting Inc. (1992)

Firstly, in making buying decisions, environmentally conscious consumers have a *need for information* about how to identify products and where to get these particular products (Ottman 1992) (row 1 of table 2.7). In the United States, 54 percent of consumers read labels at least occasionally. This figure rises to 95 percent for those consumers whose actual behaviour is consistent with very strong concerns about the environment (Roper Organisation 1992). Environmentally conscious consumers want even more information than that which is currently available on product labels and in advertising (Alvord 1991) and will go to great lengths to contact consumer hot lines to obtain this information. The majority of consumers obtain their information on environmental matters from the media, primarily via television (Ottman 1992). Australian organic products currently display six different types of labels which is confusing to the customer (Dumaresq and Green 1997), and very little information and advertising is available to improve consumer understanding of the product (Dumaresq, Green and van Kerkhoff 1996).

Secondly, environmentally conscious consumers want to *control* a world they see as risky and are taking preventative measures such as buying organic products or pesticide-free food (as shown in row 2 of table 2.7) (Ottman 1992). They also patronise retailers whom they trust. In the absence of complete knowledge about product characteristics, purchasing from trusted retailers provides an added

assurance that products are safe (Ottman 1992). Trust is particularly relevant in the niche markets for organic food in Australia where customers have a need to trust the supplier who is supplying the organic food in order to be assured the product is really an organic product (Dumaresq, Green and van Kerkhoff 1996).

Next, these consumers have a deep felt need to assume responsibility for their actions, even if only symbolically, that is, to *make a difference* (row 3 of table 2.7). While environmentally conscious consumers see industry as primarily responsible for creating environmental ills, they also recognise their own culpability (Ottman 1992). Their behaviour suggests that consumers each have an environmental repertoire representing the total of activities and trade-offs one is willing to make on behalf of the environment (row 4 of table 2.7). With organic products, an environmental repertoire may mean that the consumer supports farmers of organic products by purchasing their produce in order to feel that they are doing something for the environment, for their health or for their children (Byng 1993; Hutchins and Greenhalgh 1997). Such a repertoire is likely to reflect factors such as age, lifestyle, income, particular environmental interests and concerns, geographic locations as well as after use product disposal options (Ottman 1992).

Finally, environmentally conscious consumers are adverse to making trade-offs in their *lifestyles* as shown in row 4 of table 2.7. Though obviously concerned about the environment, many refuse to trade-off on product attributes such as performance, convenience, price or appearance (Wagner 1997). For example, organic farmers are placed at a price disadvantage against their conventional counterparts, because of the requirements of being an organic grower. In order for the grower to maintain a reasonable return, unrealistic premiums are being asked for organic foods at store level which the majority of consumers are not prepared to pay (Coutis and Ross 1997). Organic food may also have insect bites or grubs on the product as organic farming systems avoid the use of agricultural chemicals and do not rely on harmful herbicides or chemicals to control weeds and pests (Jordahl and Karlen, 1993; Logsdon, Radke and Karlen 1993; Reganold 1988). If an environmentally preferable product does not meet consumer

expectations, it is considered a waste of money (Ottman 1992). However, consumers are willing to pay this premium price and accept an inferior product, if offered perceived health or quality of life benefit (Ottman 1992)

In summary, the environmentally conscious consumer in overseas countries has a number of different internal factors that can influence their purchase decisions. Many of these factors could also apply in the Australian context. Both organic and environmentally conscious consumers make purchase decisions regarding organic products and they must be considered when examining the internal factors influencing consumer buying decisions in organic food. To assist in understanding these key factors, a theoretical framework has been developed.

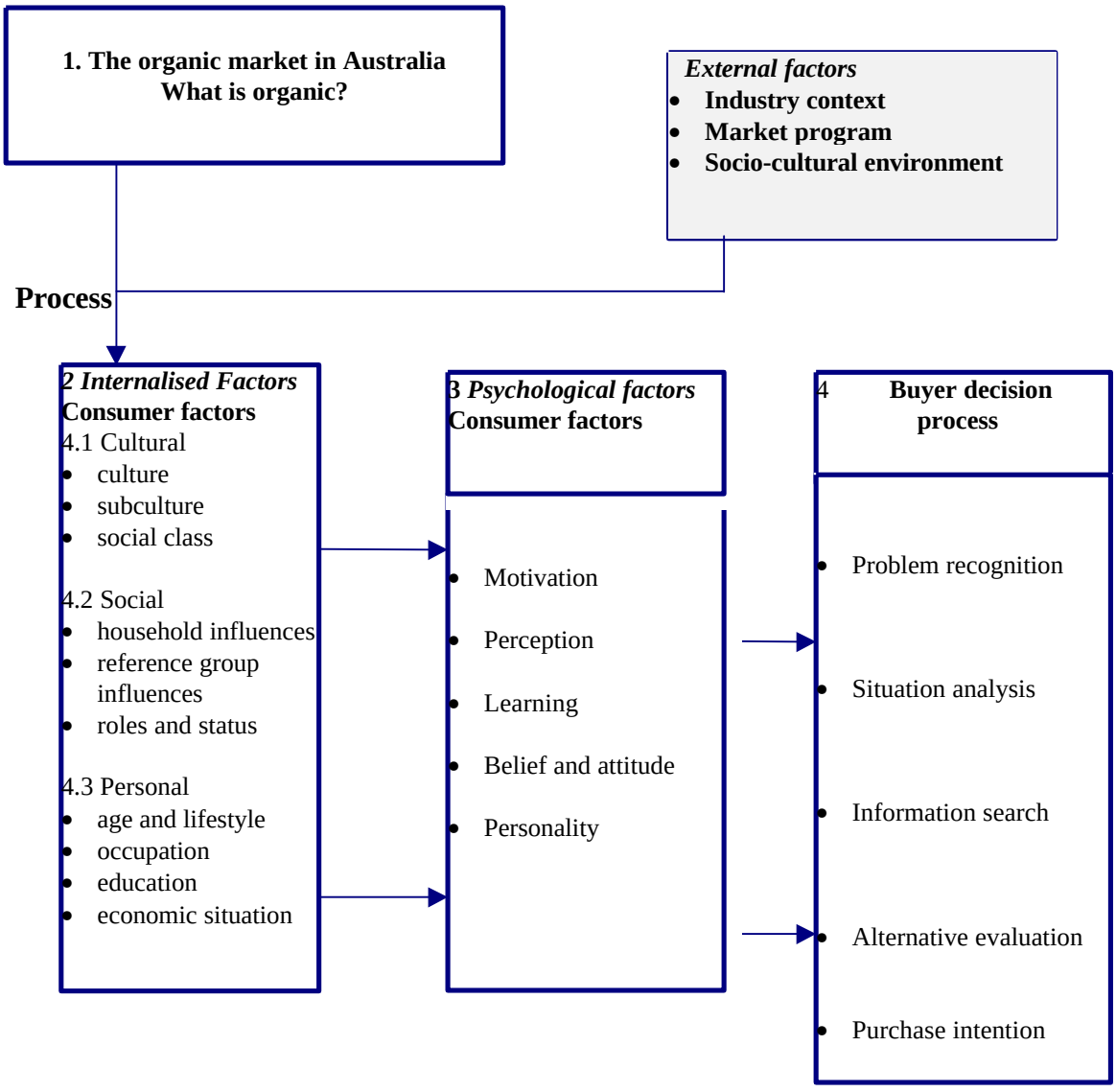
This framework will determine which factors are more important in influencing the consumer when making purchase decisions about organic products and to focus data collection and analysis on the gaps in the literature. This model adapted from Schiffman et al. (1997) shows the internalised factors of culture and social class, and personal factors having developed the model a step further. These factors are examined from an internal perspective as the process of individual development occurs (Statt 1997).

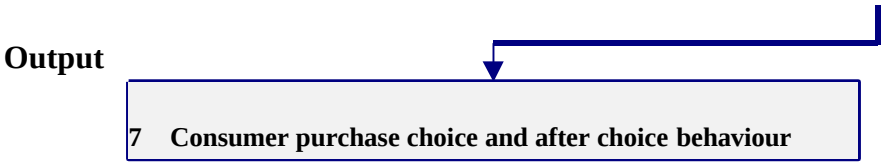
The theoretical *framework* is divided into three parts. The first part examines Australian organic market, products and the confusion in the industry (part A of figure 2.2). The second part (part B) examines the internalised and psychographic factors which influence the consumer in their buying decisions. These factors are part of the consumer 'process' function and are located in the second section in boxes two, and three of figure 2.2. Lastly, the buyer decision process is then examined (as shown in the right column, figure 2.2, box four). For the purpose of this research only internal factors influencing the consumer are examined. External factors or 'input' influencing the consumer buying decisions will not be examined as it is considered beyond the scope of this research.

In brief addressing the three parts will determine what factors are leading to confusion in the industry. Furthermore, it will determine which internal factors influence the buyer behaviour of organic consumers and the buyer decision

process of consumers towards organic products in Australia. In addition, the environmentally conscious consumer behaviour will be considered throughout this research where information is available and will be considered with relation to the high consumption focus groups.

Figure 2.2
External and internal factors influencing buyer decision making





Source: Adapted from Schiffman et al. (1997).

2.8 Internalised factors influencing the consumer

Sections 2.2 to 2.7 examined international studies relating to the internal factors that may influence the consumer in their decision to purchase organic foods. This next section examines the theory regarding internalised factors of culture, social factors and personal factors and how they relate to consumers of organic products. In particular the internal mental culture of the consumer and the external impact of the wider Australian culture are examined as these factors will influence the Australian consumers of organic products in their purchase decisions. This section on culture is followed by an examination of the social factors influencing the consumer. Personal factors of age, education, place of residence, and lifestyle are then examined in light of their impact on consumers of organic products.

2.8.1 Cultural factors influencing the consumer

The culture of a consumer and his or her beliefs and value systems relate to the decision process when purchasing organic products in Australia (Wilkie 1994). Consumer behaviour springs from the value systems and daily lifestyles of a people and generally supports their preferred way of living and viewing the world (Wilkie 1994). There are two areas of importance when examining the behaviour of organic consumers in relation to culture. Firstly, a consumer's internal mental culture and the way it is related to the culture in the individual person is examined. Secondly, the Australian culture which reflects characteristics that are different to those of other countries is examined along with how this is manifested in the buying behaviour of those consumers. Each of these will be examined in detail.

Internal mental culture refers to the ideas and points of view that are shared by most members of society (section 4.1 in figure 2.2). This internal culture includes knowledge systems (such as language), and belief and value systems such as religious,

political, or social philosophies and the social normative system (Wilkie 1994). They are learned as a person grows up, at school, or informally at home, and are generally learned so well they become the normal and natural way to think (Statt 1997). Thus they become internalised within an individual's way of thought.

Nations have dominant cultures and every nation has one or more less-dominant subcultures (Statt 1997). Nation states form the boundaries within which the psychological development of the person takes place, and they select from the vast range of psychological possibilities those aspects of behaviour that they consider most valuable. Although it is the individual Australian value systems that we are considering in this study, to understand the consumer choice of Australian values, the external cultural influences must also be examined.

The *Australian culture* reflects a set of core values that affect and reflect the character of Australian society (Schiffman et al. 1997). Australians traditionally embrace freedom of choice and individualism while valuing the collective ideals of mateship. They like to have a wide choice of products from around the world, and also 'Buy Australian' campaigns encourage Australians to consider local produce and Australian owned merchandise. In the organic market this freedom of choice and individualism does not necessarily lead the general consumer to purchase organic foods. In fact the Australian consumer has little appreciation of the benefits of organic produce which results in general apathy and an unwillingness to pay a premium for such produce with the end result being lack of demand (Coutis and Ross 1997). Thus, because of these problems, it is important for organic marketers in Australia to understand what cultural issues and influencing factors are relevant to their markets.

Although the society that makes up Australia has a social class structure, Australians seem not to be able to place themselves within groups such as "working class" (Kotler et al. 1998). Social classification schemes for consumers range from those using education, occupation, income, source of income, house type and dwelling area. There is an obvious temptation for marketers to target people in the higher social classes as they have the highest amount of disposable income. The ability of the Australian 'working class' to purchase organic products would be determined by price of the

product and the level of importance of that product to the consumer. However, working classes form an enormous market and may display greater brand loyalty than more up-market consumers (Handy 1984). With organic food in Australia priced well above normal food levels the purchasing ability of the consumer is restricted by the amount of money a consumer has to spend on their weekly needs (Carson 1998).

Australian cultures have developed from a mainly Anglo-Saxon base followed by a southern European influence (Kotler et al. 1998). Thus there have evolved many *subcultures* or smaller groups of people with shared value systems based on their common experiences and situations. Ethnic groups such as Italians and Greeks and Japanese and Chinese have distinctly different tastes and interests. In each region of Australia there are separate sub-cultural groupings and differences are exhibited in lifestyle because of climatic and distance differences. Different marketing programs need to be tailored to the needs of these segments (Kotler et al. 1998) for different ethnic groups may prefer varieties of organic products that have not been previously grown in Australia. Thus it is important to understand a national culture in broad general terms to be aware of its most basic values (Statt 1997).

2.8.2 Social factors that influence the consumer

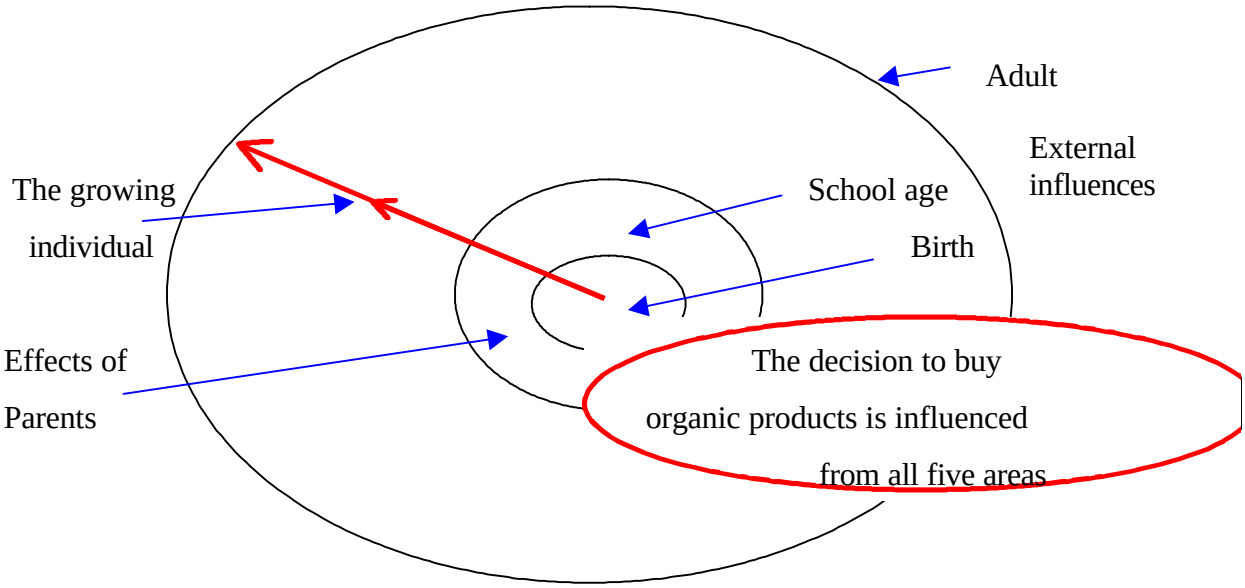
Culture is not the only factor influencing consumer behaviour (section 4.1 in figure 2.2). The *social role* of an individual consumer also has a bearing on the manner in which he will attend to information (Britt 1978). Consumer behaviour is therefore influenced by social factors of the consumer's household members, their reference groups, and their social roles and status (Kotler et al. 1998). Individuals who identify themselves with a particular reference individual seek to approximate the behaviour and values of that individual in his several roles (Hawkins et al. 1994). Reference groups are particularly relevant in the area of organic food, because individuals seek opinions from these groups or share values or beliefs regarding organic products or methods of farming, to guide or give assurance that the products they are considering purchasing, are really organic. These social factors are examined from an internal perspective as the process of individual development, both mental and emotional, is affected by the various social influences as an individual grows up (figure 2.3). For

example, if a consumer's mother always purchased organic products, the social influence on this consumer as they grew up would be stronger than those consumers with families who have never purchased organic food.

These social roles are not the only influence on consumer behaviour. Consumers psychologically develop at different rates with many influences, and are open to influences from their external social environment and their family (Statt 1997). The consumer uses these external influences and internalises them when growing and developing. These internal influences affect consumer buyer decisions as seen in figure 2.3. In this diagram cultural and personal changes within the individual were included in figure 2.3 because both these factors along with social factors influence the individual internal mental culture as the consumer ages. All of these factors influence the individual in their buying decisions for organic products .

Figure 2.3

Cultural, social and personal influences on individual growth



Source: Adapted from Statt (1997).

In turn, *other social influences* effect the growing individual through growth are examined (Statt 1997) such as household members, groups of people and roles and status. Firstly factors that strongly influence buyer behaviour include a person's *household members* (Kotler et al. 1998). Family members are the most influential

primary reference group (Kotler 1997). A reference group includes a person or group that serves as a point of comparison or reference for an individual in the formation of either general or specific values, attitudes or behaviour (Schiffman et al. 1997). According to marketers there are two families in a buyers' life (Kotler et al. 1998). The family of orientation consists of one's parents and siblings which gives the consumer an orientation toward, religion, politics, economics, personal ambition and self worth. A more direct influence on buying behaviour is the family of procreation

or one's spouse and children (Kotler et al. 1998). For example, organic consumers with children might have an orientation toward purchasing organic products if they were concerned that the children's health might suffer with prolonged pesticide intake.

Marketers are interested in the roles and relative influence the different family members have in the purchase of products (Kotler et al. 1998). However family patterns are gradually changing, especially in Australia where the family is declining in its influence (Swan 1999). Today, figures on Australian family patterns show just 40 percent of families consist of a couple with dependent children in a registered marriage, while 30 percent of families are couples without children. Lone parent families represent a further 13 percent of families, and 8.4 per cent of all couples are in a defacto relationship (Neal, Quester and Hawkins 1999). Many wives are employed outside home and their husbands share household responsibilities (Kotler et al. 1998).

Australians are having fewer children and there is a disproportionate number of children now being raised in single income households and in households where neither parents work (Swan, 1999). Such families are restricted in resources and are then less likely to purchase often higher priced organic foods. Even with the teenage children working, this does not improve the family resources as children rarely assist the family financially. (Schiffman et al. 1997). Another shift in buying patterns is the increasing amount of money that children are spending on their needs (Kotler et al. 1998). In spite of this, children do not appear to be major buyers in the organic food market, however, they are a major source of information in the family purchasing context, and pester power is notably increasing with the development of power marketing communications targeted at children as influencers in the family group (Strong 1998).

In addition to household members, *groups of people* also influence a person's usage of product category, the type of product used, or the brand used (Neal, Quester and Hawkins 1999). Some groups are primary groups where there is regular but informal

interaction (Kotler et al. 1998). These groups would include neighbours family and friends. Others are secondary groups which are more formal and have less regular interaction such as religious groups, green groups, or professional associations (Kotler et al. 1998). A person's reference groups consist of all the groups that have direct (face-to-face) or indirect influence on a person's attitudes or behaviour (Kotler 1997). Marketers try to identify their target customers' reference groups however, they find the level of influence varies among products and brand choice (Kotler 1997). Organic consumers generally have an interest in finding out more information on the topic and tend to join or consult groups with similar interests. Green, natural grower or organic groups are generally considered to be excellent reference groups for consumers of organic products (Wagner 1997).

A person's position in one of these groups can be defined in terms of *a role or status* (Dahrendorf 1973; Worsley 1991). The role refers to is the activities that a person is expected to perform, and each role carries a status. People choose products that communicate their role or status in society (Kotler 1997). A consumer may be attracted to an overpriced product because he feels that his role as an executive demands it. Alternatively, a less-wealthy consumer who works with others of the same class, may be attracted to a lower-priced product because, even if he could afford it, the higher priced product would contradict his other role behaviour (Britt 1978). Roles and status should be relevant to organic consumers, as the price of these products is generally higher than the price of non-organic foods. Current premiums for organic products are 20 to 40 percent higher than prices of conventional products. However, where products are in very short supply, premiums of between 100 percent and 200 percent have been paid (Department of Primary Industries 2000).

2.8.3 Personal factors of the individual

Although these social factors influence the consumer buyer decision, there are other factors such as personal characteristics of the individual that also affect the decision process. Personal characteristics are measures that describe individuals as people: these include age, sex, income, education and stage in life cycle (Wilkie 1994). Consider age first. Age has been explored by a number of researchers (Anderson, Thomas and Cunningham 1972; Anderson, Henion and Cox 1974; Hume et al. 1989; Leonard-Barton 1981; Murphy, Kangun and Locander 1978; Roberts and Bacon 1997, Tognacci et al. 1972). The general belief is that younger individuals are likely to be more sensitive to environmental issues.

There are a number of theories offered in support of this belief, but the most common argument is that those who have grown up in a time period in which environmental concerns have been a salient issue at some level, are more likely to be sensitive to these issues (Straughan and Roberts 1999). Some researchers have explored age as a correlate to green attitudes and behaviour and have found non-significant relationships (Kinnear, Taylor and Ahmed 1974; McEvoy 1972; Roper Organisation 1990; Roper Organisation 1992). Others have found the relationship to be significant and negatively correlated with environmental sensitivity and /or behaviour as predicted (Anderson, Henion and Cox 1974; Tognacci et al. 1972; Van Liere and Dunlap 1981; Zimmer, Stafford and Stafford 1994). Still others have found the relationship to be significant, but positively correlated (Samdahl and Robertson 1989).

The psychological dimension from the consumer's point of view is that people do not always look like, feel like or act like they are supposed to at their chronological age (Statt 1997). These transformations also relate to organic consumers as a young consumer may be very concerned with what they are eating and may not be expected to act with such concern. Personal factors that influence the environmentally conscious consumer are examined next.

Personal factors as they relate to the environmentally conscious consumer

A consumer's sex has also been explored by many researchers (Arbuthnot 1977; Brooker 1976; Hounshell and Liggett 1973; MacDonald and Hara 1994; Stern, Deitz and Kalof 1993; Tognacci et al. 1972). The development of unique sex roles, skills and attitudes has led most researchers to argue that women are more likely than men to hold attitudes consistent with the green movement. Justification for this difference holds that women will more carefully consider the impact of their actions on others as a result of social development and sex role differences (Eagly 1987).

A person's occupation influences an environmentally conscious consumption pattern and their *income* is generally thought to be positively related to environmental sensitivity (Straughan and Roberts 1999). Indeed, income has been shown to be a predictor of environmentally conscious consumer behaviour or a related construct. (Anderson and Cunningham 1972; Anderson, Henion and Cox 1974; Antil 1978; Kinnear, Taylor and Ahmed 1974; Newell and Green 1997; Zimmer, Stafford and Stafford 1994). In fact, income may also influence environmental awareness and has been shown to be positively related to environmental sensitivity (Kassarjian 1971; Van Liere and Dunlap 1981) The most common justification for this belief is that individuals can, at higher income levels, bear the marginal increase in costs associated with favouring an environmentally friendly product offering (Anderson and Cunningham 1972; Antil 1978; Newell and Green 1997; Samdahl and Robertson 1989). However, in addition to income levels, the degree of information about the value of an environmental good, and the extent to which respondents are directly affected by changes in environment quality, will result in variations between consumers' willingness to pay and willingness to accept products (Gowdy and O'Hara, 1995).

In turn, level of *education* has also been linked to environmental attitudes and behaviour (Aaker and Bagozzi 1982; Roberts 1995; Roper 1990; Zimmer, Stafford and Stafford 1994). The hypothesised relationship has been fairly consistent across these studies and education has been shown to be positively correlated with

environment concerns and behaviour (Straughan and Roberts 1999). Moreover, a persons *place of residence* has been another variable that influences environmental awareness (Antil 1984; Hounshell and Liggett 1973; McEvoy 1972; Schwartz and Miller 1991). Those consumers living in urban areas are likely to show more favourable attitudes towards environmental issues (Hounshell and Liggett 1973).

In brief, there are many personal factors that may influence the individual consumer. All of these factors transform the individual as they go through life and influence their buying behaviour (Statt 1997). However, there are also many *lifestyle* factors that may influence the individual in their buying decisions. People that come from the same social class, occupation, or income bracket may lead quite different lifestyles (Kotler 1997). They also have many different experiences throughout their life and different consumption experiences have been shown to be an influencing factor in the environmentally conscious buying decision (Wagner 1997).

Consumption is shaped not only by the family life cycle, but also by psychological life cycle stages. Adults experience certain transformations as they go through life (Statt 1997). A person's lifestyle is the person's pattern of living in the world as expressed in the person's activities, interests and opinions. Lifestyle portrays the 'whole person' interacting with his or her environment (Kotler 1997, p. 180). Attempts to develop quantitative measures of lifestyle were initially referred to as psychographics (Hawkins et al. 1994). Since then, several research firms have developed lifestyle classifications. The most widely used in the United States is the SRI Values and Lifestyles (VALS) Typology. VALS 2 classifies people according to how they spend their time and money by dividing consumers into eight groups based on two major dimensions: self-orientation and resources.

Moreover, lifestyle characterisations of the environmentally conscious consumer that were based on a VALS typology divided green consumers into categories such as: true-blue greens, greenback greens, and sprouts (Roper Organisation 1990) This study identified five categories of consumers environmental attitudes as seen in table 2.8.

Shortly after the first study was concluded a second study released findings of a 1992 study that showed that America was greening and concluded that the one factor responsible was environmental education and awareness (Roper Organisation 1992). The value of such lifestyle information on a particular target market can be used for brand specific lifestyle analysis or new product opportunities or may even help existing products (Hawkins et al. 1994). Therefore lifestyle and experience factors may influence the purchase decisions of the environmentally conscious consumer which would be relevant to organic consumer.

Table 2.8

Definition of environmentally conscious consumer segments

The Roper Organisation & S.C. Johnston (1990) Study

Segment	Definition
True -blue greens (11%)	Actual behaviour is consistent with very strong concerns about the environment
Greenback greens (11%)	Commitment to the environment mainly manifested by willingness to pay substantially higher prices for green products
Sprouts (26%)	Show middling levels of concern about the environment and equally middling levels of behavioural response.
Grousers (24%)	Consistently rationalise their lack of pro-environmental behaviour by offering all kinds of excuses and criticising the poor performance of others
Basic browns (28%)	Do not believe individuals can make a difference in solving environmental problems, and do not want to make a difference.

Source: Adapted from Coddington (1993).

2.9 Psychological factors that influence the consumer

In turn, consumer behaviour relies heavily on decisions made by consumers (Wilkie 1994). There are four major psychological factors that can influence a persons buying decision: motivation, perception, learning and beliefs and attitude (Kotler 1997). They will be examined in turn.

Motivation. A motivational approach investigates predispositional and aspirational aspects of consumer behaviour such as needs, wants, desires, values, and involvement. Motivation has been defined as the driving force within an individual that impels him or her to action. (Maslow 1970; Schiffman and Kanuk 1987). Some needs may be biological, arising from states of tension such as hunger, or thirst, or psychological, arising from the need for recognition, esteem or belonging. These needs become a motive when aroused to a sufficient level of intensity (Kotler et al. 1998).

Strong *motivation regarding environmental issues* is a necessary factor for the occurrence of issue specific, environmentally orientated behaviour such as consumption of organic food. However, even if the general environmental concern is strong, it does not appear to be enough to lead to actual purchase behaviours (Wagner 1997). General concern about a topic such as insecticides in food has to develop into a specific attitude toward certain behaviour before such behaviour will occur (Wagner 1997) such as purchasing organic products to avoid pesticide laden food. However, health concerns and taste can also lead to motivation toward organic products as examined next.

The motives for buying organic foods can be ascribed to two environmental factors: health concerns and reasons of taste (Davies, Titterington and Cochrane 1995). Buying organic food is a lifestyle choice made by environmentally conscious customers who therefore tend to be loyal. Environmentally conscious consumers are people who like to spend their money on products they see as healthy and ecologically benign (Porritt and Winner 1988). Firstly, with regard to health concerns, public

concern about food scares would explain the increase in consumption of organic produce (Davies, Titterington and Cochrane 1995). Twelve major food scares in

Britain were identified by Lacey (1992) in the three year period between 1988 and 1991. Since then, the bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) crisis in the UK in March 1996 has had a major affect on consumer behaviour (Smith, Young and Gibson 1999). This distrust may also contribute to the move towards organically produced food (Davies, Titterington and Cochrane 1995).

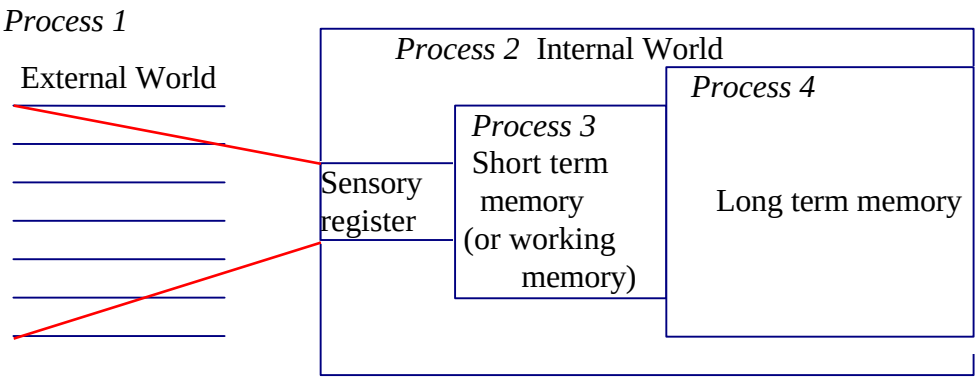
Secondly, in terms of taste, there is little consensus that organic produce tastes better than non-organic produce. The perception of improved taste in organically grown fruit and vegetables is more likely to be due to the use of varieties that give lower yields, but improved flavour (Davies, Titterington and Cochrane 1995). How a consumer perceives a product is an important motivating factor which can lead to purchase decisions and so it is examined next.

Perception. Indeed, a motivated person is ready to act and exactly how they act is influenced by the perception of the situation (Kotler et al. 1998). *Perception* is a process by which an individual selects, organises and interprets stimuli into a meaningful and coherent picture of the world (Kotler et al. 1998). Stimulus factors may include quality of the product, colour of the label, or size of the fruit (Hawkins et al. 1994). As seen in table 2.4, there are two key factors that determine what will be perceived and how it will be perceived: stimulus characteristics and consumer characteristics. Consumers are incapable of and uninterested in perceiving and processing all other aspects of their environment (Wilkie 1994).

Thus, consumer information processing goes through four main stages where the stimuli are transformed into information and stored (figure 2.4)(Wilkie 1994). The first three of these stages constitutes the perception process. Exposure occurs when a stimulus such as an organic product comes within the range of a person's sensory receptor nerves. Attention occurs when the nerves pass sensations to the brain for processing. An organic consumer would pay attention to a product and read the label or notice marks on fruit. Meaning is assigned to the received sensations and this is called interpretation. This consumer may interpret the label and give it meaning or use the marks on the fruit to recognise it as organic.

Figure 2.4

The four processes of the consumer information processing system



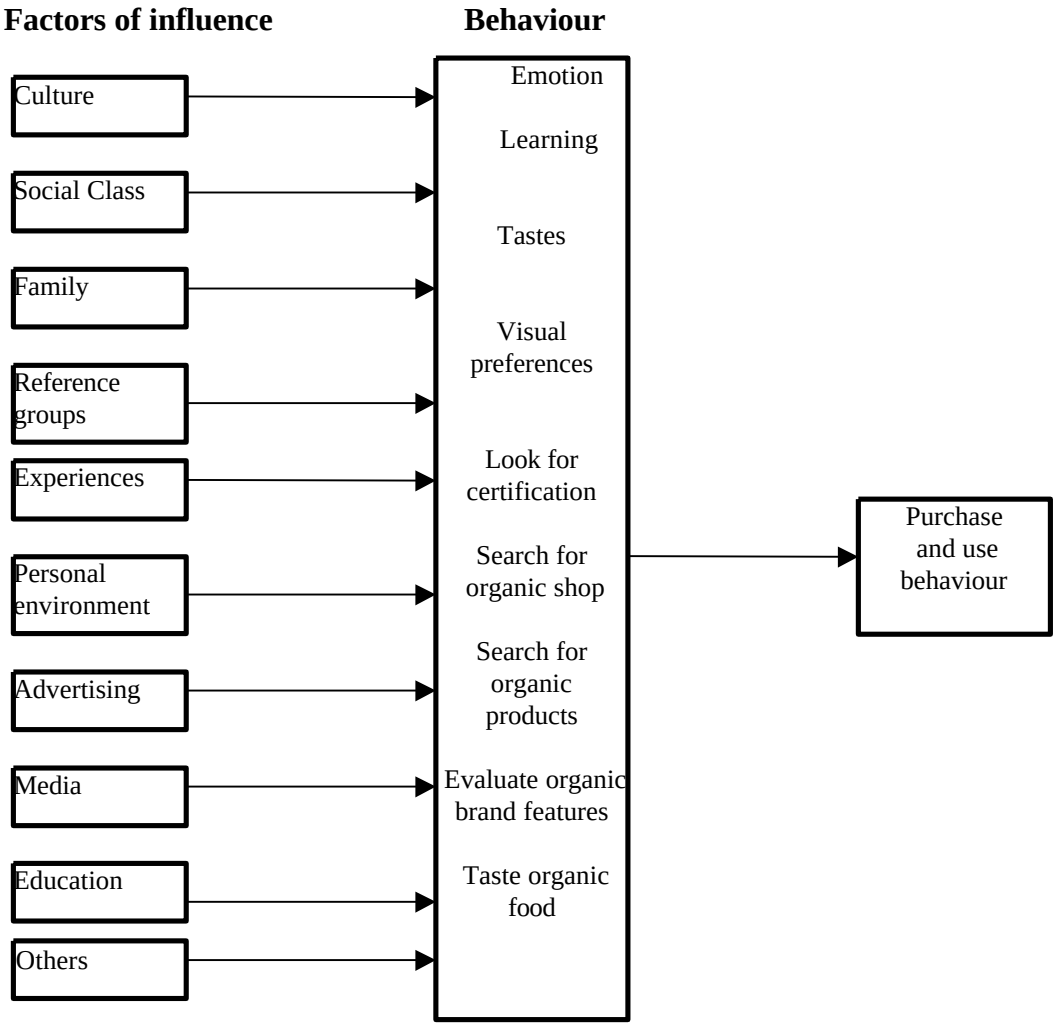
Source: Adapted from Wilkie (1994).

From this point the short term memory is used for immediate decision making or the long term memory is used for retention of the meaning (Neal, Quester and Hawkins 1999). The consumer may decide to buy the product or remember where it is sitting on the shelf for a later purchase. Awareness of food safety issues (and health issues) and their perceived impact is crucial in the context of food consumption. This awareness is in turn linked to consumers' perceptions of risk (Richardson, Shepherd and Elliman 1994). Where risks are ambiguously or anecdotally perceived to be high, then information about risks is more likely to be sought (Frewer and Shepherd 1994). This sought information leads to a storing of information and learning which is discussed next.

Learning. Consumer behaviour depends on learning from prior experience (Wilkie 1994) and is largely learned behaviour. Learning is the process by which individuals acquire the purchase and consumption knowledge and experience they apply to future related behaviour (Schiffman et al. 1997). Most of our attitudes, values, tastes, behaviours, preferences, symbolic meanings, and feelings are acquired through learning, as summarised in figure 2.5. A consumer interested in organic food is more likely to want to learn more about these types of products and to retain this information in their long term memory. Different buying experiences would also be retained. All this information stored in the long term memory is able to be recalled when needed and would influence later purchase decisions. Culture and social class, through such institutions as schools and religious organisations, as well as

Figure 2.5

Learning is a key to consumer behaviour



Source: Adapted from Neal, Quester and Hawkins (1999).

family and friends, provide learning experiences that greatly influence the type of lifestyle sought by consumers as well as the products they consume (Neal, Quester and Hawkins 1999). Learning occurs through the interplay of drives, stimuli, cues, responses and reinforcement (Kotler et al. 1998). If the material to be learned has high

levels of these five factors then learning will come about more rapidly and last longer and influence future buying decisions.

Attitudes. Next, people acquire their attitudes and beliefs which in turn influences their buying behaviour through acting and learning (Kotler et al. 1998). Firstly, attitudes play an important role in guiding behaviour and serving people's psychological needs (Katz 1960; Smith, Bruner and White 1956). Attitudes influence as well as reflect, the lifestyle individuals pursue and should be considered as having three components; cognitive, affective and behavioural.

Increasing awareness and deepening of attitudes towards the environment have been observed in many western societies over past decades (Wagner 1997). Many researchers have attempted to understand the relationship between general environmental knowledge and attitudes, which encompass knowledge of and attitudes toward the environment as a whole. (Dispoto 1977; Loundsbury and Tournatsky 1977; Maloney and Ward 1973; Maloney, Ward and Brauch 1975; Murphy, Laczniak, and Robinson 1979; Seligman et al. 1979; Synodinos 1990; Van Dam 1991; Weigel and Weigel 1978). However deep concern about the state of the environment have not matched actual behaviours causing some researchers to diagnose a so-called 'attitude-behaviour' gap (Meffert 1993; Peattie 1995; Wong, Turner and Stoneman 1995). This 'attitude-behaviour gap' occurs between pro-environmental attitudes and pro-environmental behaviour and may be attributable to deficits in the strength of conviction with which the pro-environmental attitudes are held, their lack of importance relative to other attitudes, and/or their reduced accessibility when the individual is presented with behavioural opportunities (Polonsky and Mintu-Wimsatt 1995). Only attitudes towards certain, specific, environmentally orientated behaviours, (for example an attitude toward environmentally conscious consumption), are classed

as issue specific, and it is only these issue-specific attitudes that can predict or explain actual behaviour (Wagner 1997). The environmental literature have examined the relationship between the attitudinal constructs, environmental concern, and various behavioural measures and/or observations (Antil 1984; Kinnear, Taylor and Ahmed

1974; Roberts 1995; Van Liere and Dunlap 1981), and they have found a positive correlation between environmental concern and environmentally friendly behaviour (Straughan and Roberts 1999). Therefore an attitude of environmental concern would lead to environmentally friendly behaviour such as purchasing organic food.

Beliefs. In turn, considering this relationship between environmental concern and environmentally friendly behaviour, the consumer beliefs must be examined because environmental beliefs could drive a consumer toward purchasing organic products. Consumer beliefs may be based on real knowledge, opinion, or an act of faith, and may or may not carry an emotional charge (Kotler et al. 1998). That is, belief is a descriptive thought that a person holds about something (Kotler 1997). For example, a person who holds a positive attitude toward environmentally friendly products, may also believe they are generally more expensive. When price is made temporarily salient to this person, this belief may disproportionately influence their behaviour, leading them to purchase a less environmentally sound alternative.

However, no product is completely environmentally safe, and the consumer must have a base line level of trust or belief in the product if he or she is to eat it under normal circumstances (Smith, Young and Gibson 1999). Consumers may not even check the price of the pro-environmental alternative. Alternatively a person with positive feelings associated with environmentally friendly products is less likely to be influenced by price considerations, since no negatively evaluated attributes are integrated into the attitude (Polonsky and Mintu-Wimsatt 1995).

Personality. While beliefs are a directing force that make consumer behaviour purposeful and goal-directed the personality of the consumer directs the behaviour chosen to accomplish goals in different situations. Personality theories can be categorised as being either individual theories or social learning theories (Hawkins, Best and Coney 1998). All individual personality theories have two common assumptions. Firstly that all individuals have internal characteristics or traits. Secondly that there are consistent and measurable differences between individuals on those characteristics. Most of the theories do not consider the external environment and

state that the traits formed at a very early age are relatively unchanging over the years (Hawkins, Best and Coney 1998). In turn, social learning theories emphasise the environment as an important determinant of behaviour and hence there is a focus on external versus internal factors (Hawkins, Best and Coney 1998). Personality characteristics exist in those we know, and help us to describe and differentiate between individuals.

2.10 Consumer choice and formulation of research issue II

In summary, this chapter reviewed the literature relating to the internal factors that may influence the consumer behaviour of Australian organic consumers. Firstly, the theory of consumer behaviour was introduced in section 2.6. This was used to build a theoretical foundation to identify the research issues for this research. It was noted that the theoretical framework did not include the external factors that influenced the consumer. Further studies would be needed if these factors were to be examined. However, external factors that become internalised and influence the individual are examined. Thus, the review draws on the consumer behaviour theory to examine the consumer influences of culture, social and personal factors in the Australian perspective in sections 2.7 to 2.9. This can be found in section 2 of the theoretical framework (figure 2.2).

Included in this chapter are the issues and theory surrounding the experience and lifestyle of the Australian consumers examined in section 2.8. This section examined the importance of lifestyle from the perspective of the green consumer and the role lifestyle plays in influencing the Australian consumer. Finally, the psychological factors that influence a persons buying decisions were examined in section 2.9. These can be found in section 3 of the framework. There has been no literature that considers *all* these internal factors influencing consumer behaviour of Australians towards organic products. Australian culture is different to other countries and therefore overseas studies would produce different results. Therefore these gaps lead to the second issue. RI 2: *What internal factors influence the purchase decisions of Australian consumers to buy organic products?*

Part C Making buying decisions

2.11 Consumer buying decision process

Now that the literature has been synthesised with respect to consumer behaviour and the internal factors influencing Australian organic consumers, the buying decision process that may apply to consumers of organic food, can be examined (figure 2.2). How consumers deal with information and how they create meaning during such information processing is related to buying decisions (Wagner 1997). Of particular importance to the organic industry is how internal influences affect the consumer decision process. This process comprises both the extensiveness of the decision making process and the comprehensiveness of the information search that consumers employ in purchasing food products (Chryssochoidis 2000; Kapferer and Laurent, 1983). The consumer decision making process provides a foundation for marketers to make successful decisions towards the marketing of organic products. What consumers do at different stages of the process, what factors contribute to their behaviour, and what actions can be taken by marketers of organic food to affect their behaviour is explained next (Hawkins, Best and Coney 1998).

A number of decision process models have emphasised consumer information processing and problem solving behaviour. Although decision process models have been suggested in a number of different areas of study, most have many concepts in common. They deal with the individual acquisition of information and describe how this information is related in order to reach a decision (Hansen 1972). One of the first models in the area of consumer behaviour is presented by Engle, Kollat and Blackwell (1968) who discuss decision processes in connection with impulse purchases. Closely related to this is the family decision making model developed by Grandbois (1963) and the later and more elaborate versions presented by Engel, Kolatt

and Blackwell (1973) and by Howard and Sheth (1969). All of these models are concerned with consumer behaviour and put a major emphasis on information search (Hansen 1972). For the purpose of this research the model presented by Engle, Kolatt and Blackwell (1968) is examined as it applies to both extended and limited problem solving; it is illustrated in table 2.9.

As seen in Engle, Kolatt and Blackwell's (1968) model, there are various types of consumer decision making (Hawkins, Best and Coney 1998). Consumers decisions can include nominal decisions which may not end in a decision, habitual decisions which involve no searching process, limited decision with a very low level involvement when purchasing products, or extended decisions which portray a high level of search and involvement and where decision making becomes increasingly complex, as summarised in table 2.9 (Engle, Warshaw and Kinnear 1994; Hawkins, Best and Coney 1998). Routine response behaviour occurs in cases where buyers face simple decisions for low-cost frequently purchased items in familiar product classes. Generally buyers do not give much thought to these types of decisions (Kotler et al. 1996), and familiarity reflects their buying habits.

Furthermore, research into established habitual learning-by-doing was undertaken in America on members of top cognitive categories (Wagner 1997). Cognition refers to knowledge and intelligence, to understanding and learning. It reflects processes of self-communication at the level of the mind of the individual. These studies revealed that people remembered how and when they had changed their buying behaviours from 'non-green' practices to 'greener' ones and often they could indicate for how long they had been pursuing a certain 'green' shopping practice. Consumers in the lower cognitive categories only remembered unsuccessful instances of green trial behaviour which had no lasting impact on shopping habits (Wagner 1997).

In turn, with limited problem solving, buyers are aware of the product class, but not familiar with brands and features. This limited problem solving behaviour generally leads to a limited information search and evaluation (Kotler 1996). Extensive decision making is the response to a high level of purchase involvement. An extensive internal and external information search is followed by evaluation of multiple alternatives (Hawkins, Best and Coney 1998). Consumers may probably act in a more thoughtful

manner when buying organic food products due to ecological concerns and the importance they attribute to food health issues (Chryssochoidis 2000)

The first stage of the consumer decision making process is when consumers recognise a need for something (Statt 1997) (row 1 of table 2.9) or when there is a discrepancy between a consumer's desired state and their perceived actual state (Hawkins, Best and Coney 1998). An environmentally conscious consumer may recognise a need for a tasty apple and their current state of affairs might be they do not have any at home. Without recognition of a problem there is no need for consumer action (Hawkins, Best and Coney 1998). The problem recognition process is the degree to which the desired state is out of alignment with the actual state. Consumer desires are the result of desired lifestyle and current situations (Hawkins, Best and Coney 1998).

Table 2.9

An overview of the differences between extended problem solving and limited problem solving

Row	Buyer Decision Process	Nominal decision making	Limited decision making	Extended decision making
1.	Motivation and need recognition	Low involvement	Low involvement	High involvement
2	Search for information	Habitual/brand loyal Low involvement	Low motivation to search	Strong motivation to search.
		Information processing automatic	Information processing not deep	Information processed actively and rigorously
		Single preferred buying action	Buying action influenced by brand recognition	Buying action influenced by brand recall
3	Alternative evaluation	Automatic only if brand fails to perform	Nonrigorous evaluation after purchase	Rigorous evaluation before purchase
			Limited number of criteria used	Multiple evaluative criteria used
		Does not even include 'do not purchase' alternative	Alternatives perceived as essentially similar	Alternatives perceived as significantly different
		No social compliance	Social compliance not important.	Social compliance often an important motivator
4	Purchase	Automatic shopping	Not motivated to shop extensively	Will shop many outlets if needed.
			Choice often prompted point-of-sale display and incentives.	Personal selling influences choice
5	Outcomes	Brand loyal decisions Repeat purchase	Satisfaction motivates re-brand loyalty	Satisfaction improves purchase because of

Source: Adapted from Hawkins, Best & Coney (1998) and Engle, Warshaw & Kinnear (1994)

Current situations and how they affect the consumer in their buying decision process are examined next. There are five categories of situation that influence the buyer behaviour, as shown in table 2.9. Firstly, the situation of communication or how consumers receive information has an influence on behaviour (Hawkins et al. 1994). An example of the situation of communication occurs when consumers may not notice or listen to marketing communication. Secondly, if consumers are particularly

interested in organic products, they may be receptive to the message. Thirdly, the purchase situation, (where a consumer is at the time of purchase, how much time they

have to shop, or whether they have children with them) could also influence a buyers decision (Hawkins, Best and Coney 1998). Then, the presence of children has been regarded as one which positively influences green activity (Davies, Titterington and Cochrane 1995). Households with children were more likely to purchase organic food according to a study of 1002 urban and rural consumers of organic food in Northern Island in 1993 (Davies Titterington and Cochrane 1995).

The final category of the usage situation also needs to be considered (Hawkins, Best and Coney 1998). A person who has been ill for some time, may look for a healthier choice of product such as an organic product. Concern over food safety has grown over the last four years (Wandel 1994). One United States study on food safety reported 88 percent of respondents were somewhat or very concerned about food safety. Only about 10 percent expressed no concern at all about food safety. Half of the respondents had made changes in dietary practices because of this concern. This finding led to the conclusion that interest in food safety issues had not yet peaked (Schafer et al. 1993). Another survey in Norway conducted on a representative sample of the population reported 72 percent of respondents were concerned that the food they consumed could be harmful to health (Wandel 1994).

Moreover, a consumer who perceives a need that might be satisfied by the purchase and consumption of a product, senses a need for information (Schiffman et al. 1997) A consumer *information search* refers to a deliberate attempt to gain knowledge about a product, store or purchase (Wilkie 1994). Two methods may be used to accomplish these objectives. Firstly, through incidental learning, consumers can gain information when not actually making a decision. Browsing in an organic food shop will increase information which is stored in the long term memory for use later. The second method involves a direct search and evaluation which is a conscious search for information. This search and evaluation can involve an internal search using the long

term memory. If the information is insufficient the consumer may undertake an external search for information involving stores, friends or other sources. One organic grower may go to the organic shop to ask about information on a product.

Therefore, before purchasing an organic product, a consumer may look for product attributes such as cost, size, attractiveness and colour. They would use these or other factors to evaluate the criteria. Another consumer could consider the purchase on environmental factors or an entirely different set of factors which are generally associated with benefits desired by the consumer, or costs to be incurred (Hawkins, Best and Coney 1998). Consumers develop a set of brand beliefs about where each brand stands on each attribute and the set of beliefs for each brand makes up the brand image (Kotler 1997).

Moreover, the consumer evaluates the products and forms preferences among the brands for the choice set of attributes. They can be influenced by the attributes of others, or unanticipated situational factors, or perceived risk. The amount of perceived risk is generally heavily influenced by the amount of money at stake. Consumers may make up to five purchase sub-decisions. These involve brand decisions, vendor decisions, quantity decisions, timing decisions and payment method (Kotler 1997). Finally, the decision process can lead to no decisions or a postponement of the purchase (Wilkie 1994).

2.12 Consumer choice and formulation of research issue III

After purchasing the product the consumer will be satisfied or dissatisfied with their purchase and will engage in post purchase behaviour. What determines the level of satisfaction or dissatisfaction is the relationship between the consumers expectations and the products perceived performance (Wilkie 1994). Consumers make three types of purchases: first purchases, trial purchases and repeat purchases. Firstly, purchases occur when a consumer purchases a product for the *first time*. Secondly, if the consumer does not want to buy a lot of product first time they may try a sample before

purchasing. A *trial purchase* would be a smaller than normal amount of product and the consumer would evaluate the product through direct use (Schiffman et al. 1997). Lastly, *repeat purchase* behaviour is closely related to brand loyalty (Schiffman et al. 1997). When a consumer is satisfied they will return as a customer, they talk

favourably to others, pay less attention to other brands, and will buy other products from the company (Kotler et al. 1998).

In turn, almost all major purchases result in cognitive dissonance, or discomfort caused by post purchase conflict (Kotler et al. 1998). Every purchase involves compromise. Consumers feel uneasy about acquiring drawbacks of the chosen brand and losing the benefits of the brands not purchased. A dissatisfied consumer will tell a lot of people that they have a problem which can quickly do damage to consumer attitudes to a company and its products. Marketers can help customers to feel good about their purchases by taking steps to reduce consumer post purchase dissatisfaction (Kotler et al. 1998). For example, the organic marketers could regularly survey their customers to ask customer suggestions for product improvements.

Part C reviewed the literature and theory relating to the buyer purchase decision process. There has been no literature written on the purchase decision process in Australia on organic products and thus the review is mostly theoretical. The complex process of the consumer buyer decision has been identified as a major determinant of how consumers purchase organic products in Australia. There is a need to determine which purchase decision structure is more commonly used by Australian consumers toward organic products in order to be able to target marketing strategies correctly. Therefore these gaps lead to research issue number 3:

RI 3: *What is the purchase decision structure consumers use when purchasing organic products in Australia?*

2.13 Conclusion

This chapter has built a theoretical foundation on which the research is based. It has reviewed extant literature and identified the research issues that need to be addressed.

The literature review was divided into three sections. Part A of this chapter has examined the current literature relating to the organic industry in Australia and addressed the Australian context of the industry and the industry confusion. Literature relating to the green consumer was also examined. It was found that none of the literature addressed the question of how consumers identify organic products in Australia. These gaps led to the first research issue in section 2.5.

RI 1: How do consumers identify organic products?

Secondly, part B introduced the theory of consumer behaviour and used this to build a theoretical foundation to identify the research issues for this research. The internalised factors of the consumer such as cultural, social and personal factors that influence consumer buying decisions were examined in sections 2.7 to 2.9. Then the psychological factors that influence a persons buying decisions were examined. There was no literature found that considered all the internal factors influencing consumer behaviour of Australians towards organic products. Therefore these gaps led to the second research issue.

RI 2: *What internal factors influence the purchase decisions of Australian consumers to buy organic products?*

Part C reviewed the literature and theory relating to the consumer buying decision process. This process revealed a need to determine which purchase decision structure is more commonly used by Australian organic consumers and RI3.

RI 3: *What is the purchase decision structure consumers use when purchasing organic products in Australia?*

In brief, this chapter has built a theoretical foundation and identified three research issues from the extant literature and theory on consumer behaviour.

3. Methodology

3.1 Introduction

Section 2 examined the current literature regarding the organic industry and introduced the theory of consumer behaviour building a theoretical foundation to identify the research issues. This section introduces qualitative and quantitative research methods

and justifies the choice of focus group research to investigate the research issues. A framework for focus group research is developed (figure 3.1) and the research problem is defined in section 3.4. The process of how the focus groups were developed and conducted is explained in detail in this section. Focus groups are a qualitative research method and this is examined in more detail next.

3.1.1 Qualitative and quantitative research methods

The decision as to adopt a quantitative or qualitative research method depends upon the potential contribution of either method to solving the chosen research problem (Gutman and Alden 1985; Wells 1993). In the previous section the research problem was outlined and in order to understand how and why consumers purchase organic products in Australia. It was decided a qualitative research approach was likely to be a more successful research method for the type of investigation of choice behaviour. This method tried to capture the subjective standpoint of the consumer through focus groups encouraged the consumer to talk freely about the subject under investigation (Wagner 1997). The differences between qualitative and quantitative research is illustrated in table 3.1.

Qualitative research concentrates on understanding and interpretation (table 3.1) and is often in the form of themes, motifs, generalisations and taxonomies (Neuman 1994), whereas quantitative research concentrates on description and explanation and tests with the hypothesis that the researcher begins with. In qualitative research the theory can be causal or non causal and is often inductive and the analysis proceeds by extracting themes or generalisations from evidence and organising data to present a coherent picture. This is relevant to the study being undertaken as the research involves understanding and interpretation and is often inductive. The analysis of the focus group research has involved extracting generalisations and organising data rather than the statistical analysis relating back to a hypothesis as in quantitative research.

Table 3.1

Differences between qualitative and quantitative research

Quantitative research	Qualitative research

Hypotheses, research and concepts

Test with hypothesis that the researcher begins with	Researcher becomes immersed in data and captures and discovers meaning
Research concentrates on description and explanation Well-defined, narrow studies	Research concentrates on understanding and interpretation Narrow as well as total studies
Concepts are in the form of distinct meaning	Concepts are in the form of themes, motifs, generalisations, taxonomies

Measures, data and theory

Measures are systematically created before data collection and are standardised	Measures are created in an ad hoc manner and are often specific to the individual
Data are in the form of numbers from precise measurements	Data are in the form of words from documents, observations and transcripts.
Theory is largely causal and deductive	Theory can be causal or non causal and is often inductive.

Researchers and analysis

Researchers strive to use a consistently rational, verbal, and logical approach to their object of research	Pre-understanding that often cannot be articulated in words or is not entirely conscious-tacit knowledge-takes on an important role
Researchers are detatched—i.e., they maintain a distance between themselves and the object of research; take on the role of external observer	Both distance and involvement; researchers are actors who also want to experience what they are studying from the inside
Researchers try to be emotionally neutral and make a clear distinction between reasoning and feeling.	Researchers allow both feelings and reason to govern their actions
Analysis proceeds by using statistics, tables or charts and discussing how what they show relates to hypothesis	Analysis proceeds by extracting themes or generalisations from evidence and organising data to present a coherent consistent picture

Source: Adapted from Gummesson (2000); Miyauchi (1995); Neuman (1994).

This report used qualitative research to assist in discovering new ideas, diagnosing situations and screening alternatives (Morgan 1988; Stewart and Shamdasani 1990; Zikmund 1997). Quantitative methods tend to have an edge over qualitative methods with regard to precision and reliability, through their strict control and manipulation of their research environment (Morrison 1998; Stoecker 1991; Thorngate 1976; Weick 1979; Yin 1989). However, the rigidity of control and the artificiality of the research environment - normally the laboratory - may pose threats to external validity in a *social science* (Coolican 1990; Wagner 1997; Yin 1989). The possibly lower precision of

qualitative methods is due to their information richness (Bartlett 1932; Cohen 1989; Stoecker 1991; Wagner 1997). Thus irrelevance, triviality, and a weak record regarding external validity are evident in much quantitative research in cognitive psychology (Bryce 1985; Coolican 1990; Gardner 1987; Tulving 1985; Varela, Thompson & Rosch 1991). Similar accusations have been voiced for consumer behaviour research (Foxall 1993; Shimp 1994; Wells 1993).

In turn, the qualitative paradigm approach was useful in this area of consumer behaviour where social structures are in place and marketing ideas are needed to be generated and assessed (Kotler et al. 1998; Morgan 1998) The review emphasises the social motivations of the consumer allowing the researcher to gain an understanding of the beliefs, attitudes and influences within their environment (Kotler et al. 1998). That is, the three research issues were in the interview protocol to help the moderator guide the discussion.

3.2 Focus group research

Focus groups were primarily carried out in the area of social science in both academic and applied settings (Morgan, 1998). More recently, focus group research is one of the most widely used research tools in the social sciences (Healy and Perry 1998; Stewart and Shamdasani 1990) and is especially effective in market research involving customers. It is usually associated with market research where it is now regarded as the predominant form of qualitative research (Advertising Research Foundation 1985; Bartos 1986; Denzin and Lincoln 1994; Greenbaum 1988; Malhotra et al. 1996; Moran 1986).

Most recently, focus group interviews have been regarded as a crucial step in shaping the marketing strategy for products and have been widely accepted in marketing research as well as a wide variety of disciplines (Krueger 1988). For example, focus groups have been used in studies in the film industry (Vichas 1983); television commercials (Bellenger, Bernhardt and Goldstrucker 1976; Coe and MacLachlan 1980) health studies (Basch 1987; O'Brien 1993) communication studies (Brotherson and Goldstein 1992; Flores and Alonso 1995) and political science (Delli Carpini and Williams 1994; Kullberg 1994).

For this research, a focus group which is a method of data collection through group interaction and so it can be defined as 'a research technique that collects data through group interaction on a topic determined by the researcher' (Morgan 1996, p. 130). It is not a rigidly constructed question and answer session, but a flexible format that encourages discussion. Participants meet at a central location at a designated time (Zikmund 1997). The group consists of an interviewer or moderator and six to ten participants who discuss a single topic.

3.3 Framework for focus group research

All research methodologies, including focus groups, need a rigorous framework and prior planning (Krueger 1993) because quality is affected when the purpose of a focus group is not clear (Krueger 1988). Strict guidelines were followed in this research when conducting the focus group interviews. Figure 3.1 outlines the steps that were followed and the following sections detail how these steps were addressed.

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Figure 3.1

Framework for focus group research that is used in this research with sections in brackets

1. Defining the problem (section 3.4)

2. Justification of method (section 3.5)

3. Selecting the samples and determining a suitable site (section 3.6)
   Selecting the samples (section 3.6.1)
   Selecting the suitable site (section 3.6.2)

4. Establishing the groups (section 3.7)
   - number of groups (section 3.7.1)
   - number of participants in each group (section 3.7.2)
   - determining the length of the sessions (section 3.7.3)

5. Identifying a moderator (section 3.8)

Source: developed for this research from Carson et al. (2000); Healey (2000); Keown (1983); Stewart and Shamdasani (1990).

3.4 Step one: defining the problem

Successful projects begin with careful planning. Making effective decisions requires knowing what the project is supposed to accomplish (Morgan and Scannell 1998). The first step to focus group research is a thorough understanding of the problem (Payne 1976). The purpose of the focus groups in this research is to gain insights into how and why consumers purchase organic products in Australia and to obtain ideas about the theoretical model that has been developed for this research.

3.5 Step two: justification of method

The main qualitative research method chosen was that of focus groups. This use of group interaction produced insights and data into the behaviour of organic food consumers (Carson et al. 2000). Focus groups were justified on the basis of the four points of collection of preliminary information, flexibility, group interaction and savings in time and money (Healy 2000).

Collection of preliminary information. Focus groups are a data collection technique that capitalises on the interaction within a group to elicit rich experiential data (Morgan 1998). It is a set of procedures for the collection and analysis of qualitative data that may help gain an enlarged sociological and psychological understanding in a sphere of human experience (Merton 1987). Focus group research is often described as the most useful and appropriate in the exploratory and development phase of research where little is known about the topic of research (Calder 1977; Carson et al. 2000; Goldman

1962; Morgan 1988; Morgan and Krueger 1993; Stewart and Shamdasani 1990). Exploratory focus groups are often used to obtain general background information about a topic and to stimulate new ideas and product concepts. They enable the researcher to learn how respondents talk about the phenomenon of interest (Carson et al. 2000; Lederman 1990; Morgan 1988; Morrison 1998) and to collect and analise information to answer a question that addresses a need. In brief, this method of exploratory research was chosen to test the appropriateness of the framework that was developed in figure 2.2.

Flexibility. Researchers use focus groups in a variety of ways. Focus groups can be used as the sole research strategy on a project to explore new research areas or examine well-known research questions. Alternatively focus groups can be used in conjunction with other methods of research to prepare for specific issues in a larger project, or as follow-up research to clarify findings in other data (Morgan 1988). In brief, focus groups can be used to examine a wide range of topics with a variety of individuals and in a variety of settings

Group interaction. There are many advantages to interviewing in a group situation. Focus groups were particularly chosen for this research as they had many advantages because of the group situation. Interaction among group members stimulates new ideas regarding the topic under discussion, that may never be mentioned in individual interviewing (Morgan and Krueger 1993; Morrison 1998). When group members bring up new ideas the group as a whole are given the opportunity to react in a variety of ways. The idea can be discussed freely, enthusiastically taken up by the group and ultimately accepted or rejected (Hayes and Tathum 1989). Focus groups allow respondents to build upon the responses of other group members (Stewart and Shamdasani 1990). Not only do participants help each other to overcome embarrassment, but they can also provide mutual support in expressing feelings which are common to the group or deviant from mainstream culture (Kitzinger 1994; Morrison 1998). There is also an opportunity to observe directly the group process. In the group interview respondents react to each other, and their behaviour is directly observed (Hayes and Tathum 1989).

Within the two hours of a typical group session, some group members modify their initial reaction, defend their position and some admit confusion. This pattern of modification often leads to understanding motives (Hayes and Tathum 1989). The general pleasantness of the focus group environment influences the level of rapport and participation (Stewart and Shamdasani 1990).

Savings in time and money. Focus groups provide data from a group of people much more quickly and at less cost than if each individual were interviewed separately (Morgan 1988; Stewart and Shamdasani 1990). They can be assembled at shorter notice than would be required for a larger survey (Stewart and Shamdasani 1990). That is, the open response format provides an opportunity to obtain large and rich amounts of data on a topic in a limited period of time (Stewart and Shamdasani 1990). Furthermore, there are further savings in transcription and analysis with fewer audio tapes being used (Carson et al. 2000; Morgan and Krueger 1993;). Recruitment and analysis are likely to be expensive and time-consuming unless the participants are already at hand (Morgan and Krueger 1993).

In this research, the topic of consumer behaviour toward organic products is easy to discuss in group situations. The group situation will enable this research to openly

communicate their ideas, views and opinions giving an understanding of why people think and act the way they do. (Morgan 1988; Staddon 1996). The specific advantages of focus group interviews have been categorised in table 3.2. In this table the focus group advantages include a relatively high degree of structure within the focus groups, with low levels of interpretation bias and medium levels of moderator bias. Interviews however have only a relatively medium level of structure, with medium levels of interpretation bias and high levels of moderator bias.

Table 3.2

Comparison of focus groups and depth interviews

Criteria	Focus groups	Depth interviews
Degree of structure	Relatively high	Relatively medium
Probing of individual respondents	Low	High
Moderator bias	Relatively medium	Relatively high
Interpretation bias	Relatively low	Relatively medium
Uncovering subconscious information	Low	Medium to high
Discovering innovative information	High	Medium
Obtaining sensitive information	Low	Medium
Control of topic	Medium	High
Involve unusual behaviour or questioning	No	To a limited extent
Overall usefulness	Highly useful	Useful

Source: Adapted from Malhotra (1996).

More importantly, the finding from focus groups would be different from findings generated in individual interviews because interviews lack interaction of participants and quality comparison of ideas (Carson et al. 2000; Hayes and Tatham 1989, Lederman 1990; Morrison 1998). This lack of interaction of participants can be seen clearly in table 3.2 where focus groups are compared to depth interviews.

3.6 Step three: selecting the samples and determining a suitable site

3.6.1 Selecting the samples

When a group is part of a measurement tool, considerable care must be exercised in its design and composition (Stewart and Shamdasani 1990). Focus groups are conducted to obtain specific types of information from clearly identified sets of individuals. Therefore individuals invited to participate must be able and willing to provide the desired information and must be representative of the population of interest (Stewart and Shamdasani 1990). The small numbers of participants used in focus groups makes

it important the samples are properly selected (Market Research Society Research and Development Subcommittee 1979).

Three of the methods available for this research for sample selection include random sampling, convenience sampling or purposeful sampling (Krueger 1988). Firstly, with *random* sampling, every unit in a population has an equal and known chance of being selected (Zikmund 1997). This was not suitable because of the limitations on generalisability of focus group results (Stewart and Shamdasani 1990). Secondly *convenience* sampling was considered. This procedure is generally used to obtain people most conveniently available (Zikmund 1997) and is the most common method for selecting participants in focus groups (Stewart and Shamdasani 1990). Although this method saves time and money, bias is a problem when selecting samples. Convenience samples emphasise the ease of obtaining participants (Morgan 1998) however they are neither purposeful or strategic so they were not used in this research.

Lastly, *purposeful* sampling would allow the sample to be selected to satisfy the particular objectives (Greenbaum 1993). Purposeful sampling is a non probability sampling technique where an experienced researcher selects a sample based upon some appropriate characteristics of the sample members (Zikmund 1997). The goal in focus groups is to gain insight and understanding by hearing from people in depth and this requires selecting a purposeful sample that will generate the most productive discussions in the focus groups (Morgan 1998).

In this research that consisted of people with low and high consumption experience with organic food (section 3.7.1), the groups chosen were as homogenous as possible to minimise negative effects on group dynamics or quality of information. Participants for high organic consumption levels were recruited with the assistance of the Organic Growers Association in Toowoomba and members of the Sunshine Coast Environment Council. Low organic consumption level consumers were recruited from consumers who had experienced purchasing organic products but did not do so on a weekly basis.

3.6.2 Selecting a suitable site

The venue for focus groups must be one in which the respondents feel comfortable and at ease (MacFarlane-Smith 1972). They must be able to find the venue and reach it easily (Payne 1976). This research chose venues that were in close proximity to the participants in the particular groups. For example, comfortable chairs were used for the focus group in Brisbane and tea and coffee were served to help the respondents feel at ease. In Toowoomba a light dinner and drinks were served to respondents before the sessions commenced and the respondents were comfortably seated at the dining table when discussion commenced.

3.7 Step four: establishing the groups

In turn, this section justifies the number of groups, the number of participants in each group and the length of each focus group discussion.

3.7.1 Determining the number of groups

Selection of focus groups should involve theoretical and literal replication (Carson et al. 2000). In this research, there were two focus groups in each (literal replication) of two categories (theoretical replication). That is, the focus groups were divided into two categories as shown in table 3.3 and described and justified later in this section.. In other words, each category consisted of two separate homogenous groups. One

important determinant of the number of groups is the different number of subgroups required. The more homogenous the groups are in terms of background and role-based perspectives, the fewer you needed. (Morgan 1988, Morrison 1998). This categorisation of homogenous groups is useful at the analysis phase for establishing both contrasting and common views within and between the subgroups (Knodel 1993; Wimmer and Dominick 1983). When participants in a group perceive each other as fundamentally similar, they can spend less time explaining themselves to each other and more time discussing the issues at hand (Morgan 1998). Moreover, bringing together people of interest is not the only factor to be taken into account. Generating a productive discussion will depend on the compatibility of the participants. Groups of homogenous participants will introduce compatibility to the group (Morgan 1998).

Table 3.3
Focus group categories

Low organic food consumption	High organic food consumption
(two groups)	(two groups)

Focus group categories were divided into high and low organic food consumption groups. Low organic consumption experience could mean having unsuccessfully tried organic products on a supermarket shelf, having undertaken some organic shopping for a friend, or having unsuccessfully tried organic products (Wagner 1997). Such participants were more likely to interact regarding their experiences. There was no clear cut borderline between low organic consumers and high organic consumption as experience levels were likely to vary along a continuum. High organic consumers are considered to be consumers that purchased organic products on a regular basis and are generally organically conscious in their attitude to what they were purchasing (Wagner 1997).

3.7.2 Number of participants in each group

Next, how many people should be in each of this research's group? There is no consensus as to the number of participants needed in each focus group (Healy and Perry 1998), however, the most recommended size for a focus group discussion is between six and twelve participants (McDaniel and Gates 1993; Morgan 1988; Wimmer and Dominick 1983; Zikmund 1984). The presence of more than a dozen participants does not afford enough opportunity for all individuals to participate actively (Stewart and Shamdasani 1990). In turn, the issue of inadequate sample size is one of the criticisms most frequently levelled at focus group research (Lipstein 1975). For any given sample size there is a trade off between sampling and non sampling errors (Stewart and Shamdasani 1990). *In this research*, six to eight participants were chosen for each group, the number within the limits given by Knodel (1993). The first

three groups each had six respondents and the fourth group five respondents. These numbers were not design but circumstance, as it was originally intended that each group have seven participants, because this was exploratory research and a larger number of participants would have resulted in an increased number of ideas (Healy 2000; Morgan 1988).

3.7.3 Determining the length of the session

Each of the focus groups in this research could have lasted from 1 to 3 hours, although a duration of 1.5 to 2 hours is typical (Healy 2000; Malhotra et al. 1996). Thus, in order to establish a rapport with participants and fully explore all the issues, it was estimated the focus group sessions should last about 1.5 hours as is frequently recommended (Bellenger, Bernhardt and Goldstrucker 1989; Morgan 1988; Stewart and Shamdasani 1990).

3.8 Step five: identifying a moderator

The first step in each session was to define the purpose of the project, who the participants in the groups should be, and then look for the kind of moderator it would take to get useful data from these participants (Morgan and Krueger 1993). The researcher was the most suitable moderator and justified for three reasons. Firstly, because the researcher was very familiar with the topic of discussion and was able to put comments into perspective and follow up critical areas (Healy and Perry 1998; Krueger 1988; Morgan and Krueger 1993). Secondly, cost was a major consideration in the project and it was be less expensive for the researcher to moderate the groups rather than use a professional moderator (Healy and Perry 1998). Lastly the moderator was interested in people and prepared to listen carefully to what they had to say. This readily established a rapport by gaining their confidence and making them feel relaxed and eager to talk (Staddon 1996; Zikmund 1997).

As well, an *assistant moderator* took notes during the session, and controlled the audio equipment. Notes were taken on participants reactions and the proceedings of the focus group in case of equipment failure. This assisted in the post meeting analysis of each group session (Healy and Perry 1998). Assistant moderators are not often used in private research because of financial constraints (Krueger 1988), however it was

considered using an assistant moderator would allow the moderator to concentrate fully on the discussion and a volunteer was available.

3.9 Step six: conducting focus group discussions

Conducting the focus group discussions involved a number of issues: the level of moderator involvement, the number of topics in the session, wording of the questions, and pretesting the interview protocol, beginning the session as well as site selection (Carson et al. 2000). Each is discussed next.

3.9.1 The level of moderator involvement

In turn, a medium level of *moderator involvement* was justified in order to concentrate on getting the most useful material from the participants (Miyauchi 1995). This level of involvement allowed the moderator to control the dynamics of the group discussion and the topics to be discussed (Morgan 1988). The moderator could gently cut off overly dominant participants and encourage those not participating. Thus, in this research, I strived to be objective and not biased (Carson et al. 2000) and 'control group dynamics so that the desired level of involvement is planned and achieved' (Carson et al. 2000).

3.9.2 Number of topics in a session

Ten questions were asked in this research, with two probes to each question. This number was justified as it is in keeping with accepted guidelines as most interview guides consist of fewer than a dozen questions (Stewart and Shamdasani 1990). It is difficult to judge the number of questions which should be addressed as one group may react quite differently to another and this may also affect the length of the session (Stewart and Shamdasani 1990). A researcher can also add questions as the interview progresses through requests for examples and probes for more depth (Stewart and Shamdasani 1990). In this research it was necessary to add two questions to obtain more extensive explanations from the groups.

3.9.3 Wording the questions for the focus group interview guide

Questions play an important role in focus group research in getting at answers to research problems and setting the tone or climate for interaction. Questions fall into

one of two categories - they are either open or closed. Open-ended questions tend to be broader in nature allowing respondents a great deal of freedom to provide what information they wish to give. Closed-ended questions are more restrictive and tend to limit the answer options available to the participants (Stewart and Shamdasani 1990).

In this research, quality questions were asked in the prescribed format shown in appendix A, so that a maximum amount of useful information could be obtained at the group sessions (Carson et al. 2000). Open ended questions provided stimulus to the participants, starting with some general questions. Questions were worded so as not to be defensive or embarrassing. Thus questions beginning with key words such as 'what', 'which' and 'how' were used instead of 'why' questions, as respondents often rationalise answers and when asked 'why', may become defensive (Carson et al. 2000). Table 3.4 shows which questions applied to which research issues. The first two questions applied to RI1 and how the respondents identified organic products. Questions three to eight identified issues and factors that the respondents considered

important in influencing their purchase decisions for organic products in Australia. These questions addressed RI2. The final two questions identified the buying decision process of respondents which applied to RI3, and suggestions for change that respondents would like to make to the industry.

Table 3.4 - How questions apply to research issues

	Research issue	**Moderator**
RI 1	How consumers identify organic products	Q 1, Q2.
RI 2	Factors that influence the purchase decision of consumers to buy organic products	Q3, Q4, Q5, Q6, Q7, Q8.
	The purchase decision structure	Q9, Q10.

3.9.4 Pretesting the focus group interview guide

The moderator's interview guide flows directly from the research questions and sets the agenda for the focus group discussion (Malhotra 1993; Staddon 1996). This focus group interview guide was *pre-tested* to evaluate interview questions and ensure the wording of the questions was appropriate (Aaker and Day 1990; Carey 1994; Carson et al. 2000; Frey and Fontana 1993). This guide also determined whether the questions would elicit discussion and whether they could be easily understood (Stewart and Shamdasani 1990). As well, three experienced focus group moderators examined the questions before the focus groups were undertaken (Carson et al. 2000).

3.9.5 The beginning, middle and end of the session

The opening of the session was informal and friendly, assuring the session started on time with a warm welcome as suggested by Healy and Perry (1998). This was followed by a warm welcome, an overview of the topic and statement of rules. Each person stated a little about themselves to 'break the ice' within the group. This shared experience gave individuals a common base from which to start the discussion.

The moderator announced at the beginning of the session a set of three rules to be adhered to. Firstly, the participants were advised that the session was to be tape recorded, and that they should speak up, only one person talking at a time, with no side conversations between neighbours (Healy 2000). Secondly, everyone was encouraged to participate with no one person dominating the conversation. Lastly that the moderator wanted to hear about a range of different experiences in order to learn from the participants greater experience.(Krueger 1993; Morgan 1988; Morgan and Krueger 1993).

The first question was designed to engage all participants one at a time in the group discussion (Krueger 1988). Active listening was practiced (Gordon 1977) and careful attention paid not to interrupt the participants when talking (Carson et al. 2000). However, group discussions are unpredictable, and the topics of discussion might flow precisely as planned or they might take leaps and detours (Krueger 1988). The

moderator anticipated various directions the discussion might take and used flexibility in modifying the questioning route at the last minute to obtain the needed information (Krueger 1988). In this research two techniques that were used to solicit additional information were the probe and the five second pause (Healy 2000, Krueger 1988). Firstly, the request for additional information or probe was used early in the interview to communicate the importance of precision in responses. Then, the five-second pause was used after a participant comment, often prompting additional points of view or agreement with the previously mentioned position (Krueger 1988).

Before the conclusion of the session, a debriefing session was held with more information being given about the research and, in this, one more question was asked: What would you like to change in the organic market that would improve you purchasing of organic products? This approach stimulated thoughts and ideas from some participants which had not previously been mentioned in the discussion.

A summary of the main points at the end of the session confirmed the moderator's perception of the proceedings in this research (Krueger 1988). Incentives to participate should be considered. Gifts tend to be a symbol that the researcher is giving something in exchange for what has been received. The use of gifts helps promote goodwill between the participants and the researcher (Krueger 1988). In this research participants selected a bottle of wine from a number of different varieties as a gift.

3.10 Step seven: analysing the data.

The most challenging step of focus group research is the analysis of focus group data (Carson et al. 2000; Knodel 1993; Krueger 1993; Steward and Shamdasani 1990). The analysis of the data must be systematic and verifiable. It is systematic in the sense that it follows a prescribed, sequential process. The analysis must also be verifiable in that it would permit another researcher to arrive at a similar conclusion using available documents and raw data (Krueger 1998). A considerable amount of subjective judgement is necessary in the interpretation and analysis of focus group data given its qualitative nature (Knodel 1993).

Content analysis of focus group data can be performed with the assistance of computers using software programs such as NUDIST, or by manually coding the data (Carson et al. 2000). That is, it reviews the focus group data which includes tape recordings and or transcripts, questioning route, summary reports and demographic information about the participants, and attaches tags or labels to 'chunks' of data. A chunk can be anything from a phrase, a sentence or sentences, or whole paragraphs (Carson et al. 2000; Krueger 1988).

This research developed a start list of codes prior to conducting the field work. This list came from the conceptual framework in figure 2.2 and included issues relevant to the influencing factors (Carson et al. 2000). The transcription of the session enabled the researcher to scan the comments and develop the coding system, adding to the

codes if necessary and coding each comment into the appropriate category. This was a combination of two methods: firstly a list developed from the framework, and another method known as open coding (Neuman 1994).

Ideally, the moderator or assistant moderator should do the analysis (Krueger 1988). These individuals have first hand exposure to each of the discussions, have observed the interactions of participants and have had the most intensive exposure to the problem on hand (Krueger 1988). In this research, the researcher who moderated the groups analysed the research because she had a better 'feel' for the data than an external analyst could have (Carson et al. 2000).

The analysis process involved consideration of words, tone, context, nonverbals, internal consistency, specificity of responses, and big ideas (Krueger 1988). When the coding was complete summary statements were made regarding the categories.

3.11 Limitations of methodology

Focus groups offer important advantages, but they do have limitations. Focus groups have small numbers of respondents and convenient recruiting practices that significantly limit generalisation to a larger population (Stewart and Shamdasani 1990). The interaction of respondents with one another and the researcher may have two

undesirable effects. Firstly the responses from members of the group are not independent of one another, which restricts the generalisability of results. Secondly the results obtained may be biased by a very dominant or opinionated member. More reserved group members may be hesitant to talk (Stewart and Shamdasani 1990). In addition, the moderator may bias results by knowingly or unknowingly providing cues and signals about what types of responses and answers are desirable (Carson et al. 2000). Thus, results of focus group discussions are not generalisable to the larger population because the samples in focus groups are almost always too small and too unrepresentative to generate meaningful numbers (Morgan 1998). Thus, this research is theory building and not theory testing because it does not attempt to make statistical generalisations.

3.12 Ethical considerations

Focus group interviews are easy to set up, difficult to moderate, and difficult to interpret, and are therefore very easily misused (Bellenger, Bernhardt & Goldtucker 1989). Ethical issues arise when researchers balance research requirements with social issues (Burns & Bush 1998; Healy 2000). Focus group researchers concern themselves with ethical problems associated with privacy, confidentiality, deception, accuracy of reporting and other issues (Zikmund 1997).

Many ethical issues apply to focus group research. Focus groups inevitably involve the sharing of information, hence privacy is one of the central ethical concerns in focus groups (Morgan 1998). Other issues include: the use of deception; the respondents right to be informed about the purpose of the research; the need for confidentiality; the need for honesty in collecting data; and the need for objectivity in reporting data (Zikmund 1997).

In this research, privacy of participants was protected by a promise of confidentiality to participants, and by restricting access to information that revealed participants' identities. Other guidelines that were adopted were contained in the interview protocol to ensure ethical responsibility was paramount. These included participants were

aware that they could withdraw from the research at any time; full disclosure was made about the context of the research; and the participants were all asked if they minded if the session was taped. This guidelines satisfied all requirements for informed consent (Healy 2000). In particular, issues of informed consent and confidentiality, according to the ethics guidelines of the USQ's Faculty of Business Research and Higher Degrees Committee, were followed in this research. In brief, the research addressed the participants rights and all responsibilities regarding ethical collection of data.

3.13 Conclusion

Section 3 examined the qualitative and quantitative research methods and justified the choice of focus group research. A framework for focus group research was developed and the research problem was defined. The process of how the focus groups were developed and conducted was explained in seven steps. Limitations to the methodology were noted, and the research addressed the participants rights and all responsibilities regarding ethical collection of data. In brief, this chapter described the methodology used to collect data in order to answer the research problem. Based on this methodology chapter 4 will analyse that data by examining the data collected from the focus groups.

4 Analysing the data

4.1 Introduction

Chapter 3 described the methodology used to collect data in order to answer the research problem. In turn, this chapter analyses that data by examining the data collected from the focus groups. The aim of this chapter 4 is to describe and analise the outcome of the focus groups discussions. Firstly, it will describe the participants who attended the focus groups and the arrangements what were organised. Secondly the focus group data will be gathered and interpreted. All interview questions that were constructed for this research will be examined and useful comments from the focus group participants which may not directly apply to the interview questions, will be reported. Such comments appeared to be useful in this research.

This chapter has two sections. The first section describes the methodological issues relating to how and from whom data was collected are examined first. Next, subsequently, methodological issues are discussed that relate to the analysis of the data. Secondary data was collected specifically for this research through electronic library databases (such as EBSCO Host), academic research papers, industry journals and books and a full literature review was conducted. The second section examines the primary data or data gathered and assembled specifically for the study which was gathered through focus groups.

4.2 The focus group interviews in Brisbane and Toowoomba

Four focus group interviews were held in the Brisbane and Toowoomba area two representing high level consumers of organic food and two representing low level consumers of organic food. The four focus groups are described next, and in figure 4.1.

Figure 4.1 Description of focus groups

Brisbane
Focus Group 1: Low level consumers of organic food -

Toowoomba
Focus Group 2: Low level consumers of organic food
Focus Group 3: High level consumers of organic food
Focus Group 4: High level consumers of organic food

Focus Group 1
Held 13/5/00
Time 10.00 a.m. to 11.45 a.m.
Location: Chelmer, Brisbane.
Participants:

Code	Sex	Approximate age	Comments
C1	Female	60 years	Australian originally from Denmark
C2	Female	55 years	Australian works at Griffith University
C3	Female	84 years	Australian
C4	Female	52 years	Australian - Breast cancer victim
C5	Male	54 years	Australian
C6	Female	53 years	Australian

Assistant moderator: Mr S Johnston
Moderator: Ms G Turnbull

Focus group 2:
Held 17/5/00
Time: 5.30 p.m. to 7.00 p.m.
Location: Respondents' residence - Toowoomba

Participants:

Code	Sex	Approximate age	Comments
C7	Female	63 years	Australian- Nursing Sister Toowoomba General Hospital
C8	Female	30 years	Australian resident from Central Africa
C9	Male	46 years	Australian - Student
C10	Male	20 years	Australian
C11	Female	20 years	Australian
C12	Female	50 years	Australian- Ex Health shop worker

Assistant moderator : Mr S. Johnston
Moderator: Ms G Turnbull

Focus group 3
Held : 21/5/00
Time: 1.00 p.m. to 3.00 p.m.
Location: Respondents' residence, Toowoomba
Participants:

Code	Sex	Approximate age	Comments
C13	Male	16 years	Australian - Student
C14	Male	40 years	Australian -Quarantine Inspector
C15	Female	57 years	Australian-
C16	Female	65 years	Australian-
C17	Female	50 years	Australian-
C18	Male	45 years	Australian-

Assistant moderator: Mrs M Cooper
Moderator: Ms G Turnbull

Focus Group 4

Held: 23/5/00
Time: 5.30 p.m. to 7.30 p.m.
Location: Respondents' Residence, Toowoomba
Participants:

Code	Sex	Approximate age	Comments
CG 19	Female	35	Australian, Commercial Grower Organic Food
C20	Female	80	Australian
C21	Female	45	Australian
C22	Male	60	Australian
C23	Female	55	Australian

Assistant moderator: Mrs M Cooper
Moderator: Ms G Turnbull

Codes: C = consumer CG = Consumer commercial grower

Source: focus group discussions

Focus group 1 were low level consumers of organic food. One participant was originally from Denmark although now an Australian Citizen. Another participant was a victim of Breast Cancer. Two other participants were avid readers of Choice Magazine. In *focus group 2*, two of the participants had a high interest in organic food and had consumed high levels of product in past years. However, both of these participants were no longer consuming the products at this high rate because of the price of the food and their finance availability. One participant had been employed in a Health Food store selling organic produce some years before. Thus, focus group 2 could offer personal past experiences and experiences from a marketing aspect of the topic.

Participants in *focus group 3 and 4* were chosen because of their high interest in organic food consumption. They were recruited from the Toowoomba Organic Growers Association, however, only one member was a commercial grower with approximately one hectare of land under production. Four participants in group 3 and three participants in group 4 were undertaking some home growing of organic food to supplement their budget. However most people with a keen interest in organic food consumption do try to grow some products for themselves in their back yard. It was found the Toowoomba Organic Growers Association was more of a hobby farming group of people with a keen interest in organic food and organic food consumption. Therefore, focus group 3 and 4 could offer opinions considering a high level of consumption and buying experience.

All participants confirmed their meeting on the evening before the focus group. They arrived on time, and morning, afternoon tea or light dinner was served along with beverages before commencing the session. Some of the participants in groups 1 and 2 had not met before, as in group 3 and group 4, so participants were introduced during this period of time. This ensured the participants were relaxed before the start of the session.

In conclusion, the focus groups were appropriately arranged. The next section discusses each interview question (IQ) along with important comments recorded in the focus group discussion.

4.3 (IQ 1) What do you classify as organic food and how do you tell it is organic?

Description and analysis of comments

In summary, most of the respondents (approximately 85 percent of the participants) understood that organic food was food without pesticides. Approximately three quarters of the respondents recognised 'organic' was food without herbicides and artificial fertilisers. Group 3 and 4 understood 'organic' to be also grown without artificial chemicals and with sustainable agriculture.

In brief, there was *no clear definition* of the term 'organic' and all of the groups indicated some confusion over the definition. The lower consumption groups indicated more confusion over what the term meant than the higher consumption groups with some participants relating 'organic' to genetically modified foods and additives in food. The higher consumption groups indicated technical areas of the definition that needed further explanation.

Low consumption group's views. In more detail, some respondents the lower consumption groups were quite confused regarding organic food and indicated a *lack of knowledge* of what constituted organic food. Descriptions relating to general lack of knowledge included confusing them with genetic food, food without preservatives, food with fertilisers, and free range chickens Comments included:

'I thought it was in altering genes sort of thing'.

'No preservatives added'.

'No additives really'.

'…with fertilisers that's what I think'.

'I am wondering about genetically modified foods, where do they fit in'.

'…it could be a method of growing…like herbaculture'.

Two respondents confused 'free range chickens and free range eggs' with 'organically grown chicken and eggs'.

One respondent stated 'I do buy free range eggs but I don't know if they are organic.'

Some respondents thought certain *chemicals could be used* up to a year before an organic farm was planted. Nobody appeared to be familiar with the length of *time of transition* from a chemical farming process or what this process involved. Respondents spoke of using round-up chemicals one year before planting and length of time of quarantine periods. Statements included:

'…there was a quarantine period where you can be in transition from chemical to organic procedures.'

'…you can still use round-up a year before it is planted.'

High consumption group's views. In turn, the higher consumption groups all respondents gave general definitions of the term 'organic' but *not all areas of the definition were clearly acknowledged* in one group. Some used the more general terminology of 'grown without chemicals' rather than 'grown without artificial chemicals' when relating the term 'organic' to chemical free, as well as 'grown without fertilisers' used instead of 'grown without artificial fertilisers'. One group felt organic food should be 'grown with sustainable agriculture', while the other felt 'the soil must be biologically alive'. Within the definition some respondents of the higher consumption group stated there was a further *need to clearly define*:

'Chemicals from a natural source',

'Herbicides from a natural source',

'Chemical herbicide and chemical pesticide',

'Medium'.

All group's views. When asked how they would tell the food was 'organic', approximately three quarters of all respondents stated they would rely on the shopkeepers honesty to tell them the product is organic. *Trust* and *honesty* were the major underlying factors when identifying organic food. Half of the respondents would rely on certification or labels. One respondent in the lower consumption group

had worked in a health food shop that had sold 'seconds from markets' as organic food and was 'keen on actual bodies stating that a certain farmer is working with organic things'. Comments regarding trust or lack of trust included distrust in labels, people advertising organic food, and general statements of hoping shopkeepers are honest. The comments included:

> 'I am also very cynical about labels, as I believe people can put labels on anything'.
>
> 'What one calls organic and what one doesn't. I don't know if they are buying what they think they are buying'.
>
> 'Trust people who advertise it as organic unless proven otherwise'.
>
> 'I hope the heck they are telling the truth'.
>
> 'We just took their word for it I guess'.
>
> 'You just have to trust the people that are selling it to you for organic food that they're are fair dinkum'.
>
> 'I don't know when we are buying the product whether the grower has in fact abided by those rules'.
>
> 'I believe that putting an orange flower on the label does not lure me at all'.

Other respondents commented on the *use of the term 'organic'* when they did not feel there was justification for its use. In particular one respondent referred to the 'processing' of tinned food as eliminating it from the organic range of products. Comments included:

> '…there is too much use of the word organic when it isn't'.
>
> 'What about tinned food? The fruit or vegies might have been grown organically but what happens when it then gets processed'.

Some respondents referred to *free range chickens as organic food* and indicated that they supplemented the chickens diet with pellets. There was a question as to why such food should be labelled organic. Comments included:

> 'I buy chickens from Crows Nest and they are dissected are they are supposed to be free range, but I don't know'.
>
> '…when it comes to free range chickens, you don't know what the hens are given'.

Many respondents indicated they would only *trust* the food was organic *under certain conditions*. One participant stated they would have to 'grow it myself' when referring to telling how the food was organic. Others stated they would be assured if the shopkeepers visited the farmers or if they visited the farmers themselves. It was noted that one group felt 'the BSA is the only certification that is really stringently followed up. They do inspections of the property on a regular basis. They do snap inspections to make sure they are not cheating'. Another group felt 'as long as there are company watchdogs that go out and classify it' that it would be organic. In brief, respondents indicated a *lack of trust* in shopkeepers, labels, and the actual 'organic' products being produced. Some respondents had relied on honesty and certification to ensure their purchase was organic.

Fifty percent of respondents would tell a product is organic by its *appearance*. Respondents indicated marks on the fruit and vegetables or grubs on vegetables were a sign that the food was organic. For example, comments on appearance included statements about marks, grubs, insect bites. Respondents stated:

> 'You accept a few marks on them'.
>
> 'I use to jump for joy when I found a grub in the broccoli'.
>
> 'If they were sprayed those insect bites and things wouldn't be on that food'.
>
> 'That mark on that tomato, that's your guarantee its organic'.

Other respondents felt the more *expensive price*, or a jacket on corn, was an indication of organic food. One respondent indicated purity would be more reliable if the product came from a small shop. Comments included:

‘ I accept what is coming from a shop a small shop.. will be at least more pure than what I get from a multinational or a profession’.

‘It is usually more expensive’.

‘I bought some corn… I guess if it has a jacket it proves its organic’.

Interpretations

Overall it appears that a clear definition of the term ‘organic’ is not evident. Many factors were needing further definition or were not included to define the word clearly. Most respondents had neglected to mention major factors within their definition.

Trust was a major factor when deciding how you tell a product is organic along with honesty and the appearance of the food. Half of the respondents would rely on certification or labels to determine if the food was ‘organic’.

4.4 (IQ2) Have you or any member of your family, ever purchased organic food? If so, how often? What type of product?

Description and analysis of comments

In summary, about half of the respondents said they purchased organic food monthly, occasionally or once. The other half indicated regular purchases of every week or fortnight depending on when they did their shopping. Most of the discussion centred on negative aspects of decisions to purchase organic food, which included excessively high prices, lack of availability, lack of convenient location, and poor handling and presentation. The products respondents referred to the most were in the fruit and vegetable lines.

Low consumption group’s views. In more detail, in the low consumption groups, most respondents indicated they purchased organic food occasionally, infrequently or once. Many respondents stated the reason for lack of purchase was the higher *price* of organic food and their limited income. For example, some respondents indicated that they had only purchased an organic product because it was *on special.* Two respondents in the low consumption groups had been high level consumers of organic

food in past years but were unable to purchase the food regularly now because of the high price of organic products and their lack of sufficient *income.* Other respondents indicated a need for *convenience* when shopping for organic products stating ' If I can't get it at Coles, we don't have it'. Comments from respondents in the lower consumption group regarding frequency of purchase included:

'I don't go out of my way to buy organic just because of the price'.

'…when I happen to be there'.

'…at times'.

'…about eight years ago I use to purchase nothing but, or mostly organic…. I was put off by the price' .

'A number of years ago ….we bought virtually all organic food….but I just cannot afford it'.

All group's views. Respondents in all groups expressed a concern regarding the *price* of the organic products. Most respondents stated the price was higher than normal food although some had obtained discounts for the organic food. Statements from respondents regarding the high price of organic food were as follows:

'Fresh stuff costs about twice as much at least sometimes'.

'even though that is more expensive'.

'if economics was not a question in my household I would shop there'.

'it was not cheap'.

'And got a discount. Well it made all the difference'.

Some respondents indicated they *grew some organic vegetables* which reduced the amount of products they needed to purchase. This was an indication that consumers were cutting their overall costs by growing some organic product. They stated:

' I grow my own…I have friends who give me bits and pieces otherwise I get it from the organic shop'.

'We grow our own and buy from the shop and we have a fair few fruit and vegetable juices so I go to the organic shop'.

'I try to grow our own as much as we can'.

Availability and *convenience* seemed to be a major issue for all groups. One respondent was concerned with the opportunity of not being available to purchase local organic produce, while others with the lack of parking facilities at the local organic shop. Some respondents expressed a need to shop in one place and consequently shop at the local supermarket for organic produce. Another respondent noted products were now available in the health food shops. Comments on availability and convenience included:

> 'Organic is quite hard to come by there you've got to be in quick'.
>
> ' I can't get a park anywhere near it'(referring to the Organic Shop).
>
> ' I don't have the patience or the time to sort of shop around I like the convenience of getting all my groceries in one place…hence I do a lot of our shopping in supermarkets'.
>
> '…but when I am a bit too busy, I just don't buy organic stuff, I just go to Coles'.
>
> 'One of the problems buying at the small shops is they don't have the range, the fresh range'.
>
> 'I found I could only get them from the health section of the supermarket or in organic shops'.

High consumption group's views. In the higher organic food consumption group, respondents stated they purchased organic food monthly, fortnightly or weekly or when they go to the shop. Comments from the higher consumption group on *regularity of purchase* of organic food included:

> 'Maybe once a fortnight at least'.
>
> 'We usually would probably go there once a week'.
>
> 'I get it from the organic shop when I am near it'.
>
> 'Every week more or less'.

There were negative comments from the higher consumption group regarding the *convenience* of purchasing organic food. Some respondents indicated organic food was 'quite hard to come by there, you've got to be in quick'. Others found parking

difficult near their particular organic shop. Some respondents found the fresh product range inadequate while other respondents did not have the time to shop around and wanted the convenience of obtaining all groceries in one place. Comments regarding the lack of convenience when obtaining organic products included:

> 'I don't have the patience or the time to sort of shop around I like the convenience of getting all my groceries in one place…hence I do a lot of our shopping in supermarkets'.
>
> 'but when I am a bit too busy, I just don't buy organic stuff, I just go to Coles'.
>
> 'One of the problems buying at the small shops is they don't have the range, the fresh range'.
>
> 'I found I could only get them from the health section of the supermarket or in organic shops'.

In the higher consumption group there were *negative* comments regarding the *handling and presentation* of organic products. One respondent commented 'they just keep them in the shop too long'. They expressed a need for certain products to be kept in refrigerators and commented that the products spoil otherwise. For example, one respondent stated 'like the grains, the milled grains…otherwise they start going rancid'. These negative comments regarding *handling and presentation* from the higher consumption group included:

> 'The producer tries to get them there as fresh as they possibly can, the wholesaler keeps them in the cold room for two weeks, then he sends them out so they have gone from cold to warmer and to cold again and then they sit in the storekeepers cold room for another week'.
>
> 'I do not mind old and I get a lot of wilted looking stuff'.
>
> 'A lot of these things need to be kept in refrigerators'.

Products that were *more frequently purchased* were in the fruit and vegetable line. Less than half of the respondents stated they regularly purchased fruit and vegetables however nearly three quarters of respondents referred to some type of fruit or vegetable they had purchased. Other organic products purchased regularly were in the

flour, grains, oats, cereal, eggs, honey, cheeses, tea, goats milk, soy milk, dried fruits, chickens and organic meat lines.

Interpretations

Most respondents in the lower consumption group indicated they purchased organic food monthly, occasionally or once. In the higher consumption group most respondents indicated regular purchases of every week or fortnight. Discussion centred on negative aspects of decisions to purchase organic food, which included excessively high prices, lack of availability, lack of convenient location, and poor handling and presentation. The products respondents referred to the most were in the fruit and vegetable lines however respondents indicated they were aware of most types of organic products that were available.

4.5 (1Q3) How and what did you learn about organic products and what attracted you to them?

This question had two parts and therefore comments from respondents have been analysed under the separate headings of learning and attraction below.

Description and analysis of comments

Learning. In summary, nearly half of the respondents felt they had originally learned about organic products from television, while others referred to general advertising media, press and magazines. About one quarter of respondents referred to family influence with their grandparents having a vegetable garden at home some years ago. Others referred to books on organic growing and the environment. Health concerns and reference groups were also considered important factors that had encouraged learning about organic products . Two respondents related their learning experience to culture.

Low consumption group's views. In more detail, the low consumption group spoke of with television and media, books, culture and reference groups as learning influences. Nearly all respondents agreed they had learned of organic products

through television. Some stated they had learned from 'gardening books on and off throughout the house for years'. Others had read a lot in different places. One respondent remarked they had learned by their family driving past the organic shop while another respondent felt there was still a lot more to learn.

Comments from the low consumption group regarding learning from *television, media and books* included watching current affair programs and reading grassroots magazines and were as follows:

> 'Media, watching television, a current affair program - this is were I would have learnt organic food is probably desirable, press, television and radio'.
>
> ' I had an interest in natural food and healthy living back in the 70's and I read a lot in different places. 'Grassroots magazine!'. Things like that'.

In the lower consumption group three respondents had learned of organic food through being members of *interest groups*. One respondent in the higher consumption group had learned of organic food through consulting the local gardening shop for safe chemicals, another had learned through attending classes. Comments with regard to learning through reference groups included influence through being members of different groups, councils or attending classes. Statements included:

> 'I have been aware of the Brisbane Organic Growers through membership of the Rare Fruit Council…so what I have learnt I have learnt mainly from them'.
>
> 'I have been a member of the Herb Society and have also gone to Organic Growers'.
>
> 'you go to a class and you learn about something and you say oh I am not going to eat that'.

Others in the lower consumption group responded that they had learned of organic food through *culture.* One respondent specified it was Australian middle class culture that had assisted in her learning about organic food. Comments regarding learning through culture referred to technical culture, middle class culture, and just culture and included:

> 'I would have learned about organic food just through culture'.
>
> 'Australian middle class culture'.
>
> 'Would be culture but I think the technical side of things not just the marketing side of things'.

High consumption group's views. In turn, respondents in the higher consumption groups stated they had learned of organic food through family influence, books and general influence. Three respondents referred specifically to Rachel Carsons, 'Silent Spring' while others referred to general reading of books and reading about DDT scares affecting the food chain. Comments regarding learning through *books and reading* included:

> 'I read 'Silent Spring' when I was 16 and that was my moment of revelation'.
>
> 'When I read how the DDT and all those horrible things affect the food chain it made me determined to do something personally'.
>
> 'Probably through reading I suppose'.
>
> 'Of all the books I have read I think one of the most profound in my view was Rachel Carson's 'Silent Spring'.
>
> 'Read Rachel Carson's 'Silent Spring', and virtually from then I was I suppose by degrees have become more and more organic'.

All group's views. *Family influence* was an important learning factor in both high and low consumption groups. Some respondents related their learning to influence from their grandparents others to their parents. Three respondents in Focus group 3 commented they learned of organic food through their grandparents having a vegetable garden in the backyard when they were growing up. One respondent in

Focus group 4 had been influenced by their mother while another respondent had been influenced by her relative. Comments regarding family influence toward organic food included:

> 'When I was a kid and grandpa…had a big back yard, some chickens. He grew almonds and every sort of stone fruit'.
>
> 'We have told him to believe in organic but it has just grown on him too'.
>
> '…mum talking about it'.
>
> 'My grandfather had an orchard at his home in Ipswich and well we always had organically grown food and it did taste very, very nice, and a lot of the products that you buy now don't taste nice'.

Attraction. In summary, most respondents in the lower consumption group stated they were attracted to organic food because of the *impact on health* in having less chemicals in the body. Some indicated family members suffered from medical problems because of these chemical affecting the family Respondents in both high and low consumption groups indicated *taste* was a factor that attracted them toward organic food while others mentioned *quality, environmental factors and nutritional value*.

All group's views. In more detail, many respondents in both high and low consumption groups regarded *negative health factors* as contributing to their purchasing of organic produce. Some had experienced illness or friends with illnesses which they related to the chemicals used in normal food. Focus group 2 gave many different health reasons for the attraction to organic food which included 'my son has bad asthma' and 'my husband is affected by chemicals'. Two respondents in focus group 3 had friends who had died from cancer that they assumed was caused by chemicals. One respondent stated 'knowing people who have died from cancer…who seem to come from the country areas where they were spraying very heavily', was an attracting factor. Two respondents from focus group 1 and 3 indicated they had been attracted because of suffering from sinus. Comments from respondents regarding the attraction to organic products because of negative health factors included:

‘My husband is affected by the chemicals and when I buy them (non-organic products) he just gets sick so we tend to buy organically grown produce’.

‘Matt had fairly bad asthma and I figured that anything to reduce the risks was good value’.

‘I had known…a lot of people who have died from cancer leukemia or something and a lot of them seem to come from the country areas where they were spraying very heavily’.

Other respondents in both the high and lower consumption group were attracted by the *quality and taste* of organic products. Comments regarding attraction to organic food because of positive taste referred to a better taste and good quality factors and included:

‘They taste better’.

‘Stuff out of the garden tastes better’.

‘I do like to buy good quality’.

Low consumption group’s views. In turn, the lower consumption groups indicated they were attracted to organic food because of *chemicals being used on normal products*. Others stated ‘it was attractive not to have pesticides and growing methods that deprive our rivers of water and …. degrade our soil’. All respondents were concerned about the unknown effects of chemicals used on normal food. One respondent expressed concern that the sprays used on normal food were ‘systemic’, while others commented they were ‘unhappy buying things that have been sprayed’. Some agreed we would be better off getting back to healthy like 40 /50 years ago. Comments included being aware of sprays used on normal food, and the unknown factors of what is on or in normal food. Statements included:

‘We are hearing about the way products are grown from an agricultural point of view ---one would argue that then for organic looks very cosy or cute’.

‘I have been aware for a long time of the sprays and things that are used on food’.

‘Knowing that there are no chemicals because every other food, you have no idea what you have and how much or what it does to you’.

Interpretations

Nearly half of the respondents had originally learned about organic products from television, while others referred to general advertising media, press and magazines. About one quarter of respondents referred to family influence with their grandparents having a vegetable garden at home some years ago. Others referred to books on organic growing and the environment. Health concerns and reference groups were also considered important factors that had encouraged learning about organic products . Two respondents related their learning experience to culture.

The underlying reasons regarding *attraction* to organic food included the *impact on health* in having less chemicals in the body, medical problems, taste, and quality. Most respondents in both high and low consumption groups indicated family members suffered from *medical problems* because effects from chemical residues on food. Positive discussion regarding *taste* of organic products occurred in focus group 1 and 2 with one respondent in focus group three referring to the taste of home grown organic food. Others in focus group 1 mentioned *quality of organic food, nutritional value* and *negative and positive environmental practices* as attracting factors.

4.6 (1Q4) What motivates you to purchase organic products and how does this affect your emotions?

Description and analysis of comments

In summary, most of the respondents referred to the taste of food as their motivation to purchase organic food. Some referred to ‘better feelings’ and ‘quality’ of organic food. Two of the groups felt the environment was a motivating factor Other factors of concern related to health issues and fear. Other negative comments related to the

high price of produce, farming practices, and lack of trust of labels.

In more detail, the lower consumption focus groups the motivating factors were taste, better feelings, quality, and concern for health over growth stimulants and additives in normal foods. In the higher consumption groups the major motivating factors were environmental factors and taste. Some respondents related taste to memories of past experiences on taste, while others related taste to perceptions of good health as motivating factors.

All consumption group's views. Comments from all groups on taste as a motivating factor when purchasing organic food referred to better feelings, always trying to buy the best, and something that tastes nice. Statements included:

> 'We feel better'.
>
> 'Something that is nice, something that is tasty and obviously good for you'.
>
> 'Well my motivation is to get something that tastes nice - and tastes like something that I remember as a child'.
>
> 'When I feel I need a good apple the way it tasted when I was a child in Europe'.
>
> 'I like quality products and I try to buy the best I can on any given day. So if an organic product is the best. The sub-text here is costs is always going to, to…I never not buy tomatoes no matter how much they cost'.

Low consumption group's views. In turn, the low consumption group, comments relating motivation to *health* factors included risk and concerns over what additives are being included in food. Words commonly used included 'fear' and 'risk' and reference was made to increased antibiotics in meat, growth rates of chickens, and additives in food that were not supposed to be there. Statements included:

> 'I guess the health issues motivate me'.
>
> 'I'm motivated by fear at times…when I hear increased antibiotics in meat is leading towards some secondary female characteristics in boy children …worse

immune systems and the rate of asthma has gone up and the rate of diabetes because of over processed foods and foods that don't have much nutritional value'.

'Well when I think about chickens that should take 8 to 10 weeks to grow and they grow it in four weeks its just disgusting'.

'They put all these things in which aren't supposed to be there…I don't think it is really good at all for consumption'.

'…eating non-organic food is a risk that I balance against the cost of organic food and at the moment I am going for the non-organic hoping that one day I will have enough money to buy organic all the time'.

One respondent in the lower consumption group was not motivated to purchase organic food because of *cost* of produce and *lack of trust* of labels. Another respondent considered 'economy' as a motivating factor. Comments included:

'I am not motivated to buy organic because it is too expensive and we cannot believe the labels'.

'I think its economy that is the motivating thing but I don't buy them all the time'.

'I am probably not specifically motivated to buy organic because of the cost factor'.

High consumption group's views. The higher consumption groups related their motivations to the *environment* and *health factors*. Respondents stated organic food included 'better nutrients', and led to 'better health'. One respondent was motivated by the healthy organic consumption experience relating this to a well known Gardening presenter on television and his quality health in old age. Comments regarding motivation through *health* factors by the higher consumption group included reference to health issues, higher standard of nutrients in organic food, and the fact that organic food must be better for you. Comments included:

'Mine is the health issue'.

'I think that things that are grown organically are a higher standard in nutrient'.

' Healthy soil healthy plants healthy people'.

'From what you have read and everything else that it is the better way'.

‘So health and nutrition has a lot to do with it’.

‘I feel it must be better for you, but, I am not certain it is, but, I just imagine it must be’.

Concern for the *environment* when purchasing organic food appeared to be a major motivating factor for one high consumption group. Consumers commented on negative environmental effects of normal food production which included comments about pollution to atmosphere, rivers and the food chain from the widespread use of chemicals. Some respondents were motivated to purchase organic food in order not to support the chemical manufacturers and stated, ‘they are so strong, they are ruining…people’s existence’. Other respondents were motivated by concern for the poisoning of the food chain and the rivers. Comments about pollution, excessive spraying and damage to rivers included:

‘…when there are not chemicals on these things—pollution is becoming such a problem that we could all be a bit wiser and reduce it, you know, chemicals in the atmosphere’.

‘Every time I buy organic I am putting one over these cretins that believe they can only produce a crop by spraying the existing soil, not at bugs on the plants. Those cretins that will allow all those residual pesticides and herbicides to go straight into the food chain of the environment and into our rivers’.

‘I saw the Murray River and the Darling system just about die.. you take a billy with you and you can’t drink the water’.

‘If you are at Dalby and you drink the water. Wrong! I think it’s got more than 16 times (cyanide bacteria)’.

‘So while there is considerable risk to your health to me to a certain extent it needs to be taken into account why they (chemical manufacturers) sell it. It is just what these cretins do to the environment when they do this sort of thing’.

Other respondents in the high consumption group referred to farmers of normal products who use chemicals in their *farming practices* that have organic gardens round

the back of their home for the family consumption. Comments referred to the fact that some farmers of normal food were not eating the products they produced and included:

> 'They were growing caulies and cabbages…and they would just spray and spray and there was a bit of the garden round the back of the house…and he said that's for my family to eat and it was an organic garden and he said I wouldn't eat the stuff I sell'.

Emotions. In summary, respondents in focus group 1 and 2 referred to *happy feelings*, *better feelings* and *good feelings* when purchasing organic produce. One respondent in focus group 4 also commented on 'good feelings'. Some referred to the *tasteless non organic products* making them angry, annoyed or upset. Negative comments on the high price of organic products included it leading them to purchase the tasteless non organic products. Other respondents referred to *environmental damage* and *additives in food* that provoked emotions of anger and unhappiness.

All consumption group's views. In more detail, positive comments regarding emotions towards the organic products came from both high and low consumption groups. Focus groups 1 and 2 were more vocal in their comments. These comments included *'good feelings'* and *'feeling better'* when purchasing organic food. Statements were linked with 'doing something for the environment' was making the respondents 'feel better'. Other respondents had positive emotions or 'better feelings' when the organic product being sold was local. Comments included:

> 'I do get a warm and a glow when I buy organic as I think it is going to do me and the environment a lot better than non organic'.
>
> 'I think emotionally you feel better when you eat a meal, a nice big salad and know it is all organic'.
>
> '…it makes you feel better to think that things that come to you fairly closely from where they are grown'.

Other respondents referred to *environmental damage* and *additives in food* that provoked emotions of anger and unhappiness. Respondents commented on the cotton industry with its high levels of spraying, inorganic chemicals used on food products, and growth promotants in meat and poultry as factors influencing their decisions to purchase organic products. Comments about respondents not being happy and anger included:

> 'I get angry when I see a cotton crop'.
>
> 'Whenever I see a cotton crop I just… its an emotional thing I suppose, I just see steam coming out of my ears'.
>
> ' I feel unhappy very often about having to buy things that have been sprayed but there is not a lot of other produce and affordable produce about'.
>
> 'I am angry about that' (growth promotants in our meat and poultry).
>
> 'Inorganic chemicals are used for production and I am not happy with the situation'.

Low consumption group's views. In turn, the lower consumption groups indicated most of the respondents had negative feelings about the *lack of taste of non organic products* making them feel angry, unhappy, cross or annoyed. One respondent stated she was 'frightened of it' (referring to organic food) that it might not be 'as pure as they say', while others stated 'if you shut your eyes you would not know what you are eating' (referring to normal food). Comments regarding anger, cross, annoyed, and unhappy feelings with the *lack of taste in non-organic food* included:

> '...and I feel really angry about that, and strawberries will be in soon and you get these big beautiful strawberries, absolutely no flavour'.
>
> '…it makes me angry that we are eating all this tasteless flavourless stuff that has been modified for long shelf life, and flavour and taste don't come into it at all. That's my emotions I feel really cross about it'.
>
> 'I feel angry when I go and buy tomatoes that I call Bundaberg cricket balls, they are pink and they are hard and they are absolutely tasteless'.

‘I feel unhappy very often about having to buy things that have been sprayed, but there is not a lot of other produce and affordable produce about’.

One particular group of respondents stated emotions concerned with the *high price* of organic food gave them feelings of it being a ‘treat’ when they could afford to purchase the products. Many respondents in the low consumption group expressed feelings of upset and annoyance because of the inferior quality of normal produce that they found necessary to purchase because of the high price of organic food. One respondent stated ‘it looked good and tasted terrible’. Comments included being upset poor quality of non-organic food and high price of organic food:

‘I get very upset about the price you have to pay for inferior produce, looks great but tastes terrible, so my emotions are great anger’.

‘I get annoyed at what we have to pay for stuff that is poor quality and if you want something that is organic it is too expensive to buy’.

Interpretations

Most of the respondents referred to the taste of food as their motivation to purchase organic food. Some referred to ‘better feelings’ and ‘quality’ of organic food. Two of the groups felt the environment was a motivating factor. Other factors of concern related to health issues and fear. Other negative comments related to the high price of produce, farming practices, and lack of trust of labels.

In the lower consumption focus groups the motivating factors were superior taste and quality of organic food, inferior quality of normal food, better feelings, and concern for health over growth stimulants and additives in normal foods. The higher consumption groups were motivated by environmental factors and taste. Some respondents related taste to memories of past experiences on taste, while others related taste to perceptions of good health as motivating factors.

Most of the respondents referred to *happy feelings* and *good feelings* when purchasing organic produce. Some referred to the *tasteless non organic products* making them angry, annoyed or upset. In the lower consumption groups most of the respondents indicated negative feelings with the lack of taste of non organic products making them feel angry or unhappy. Some respondents commented on negative environmental and healthy food issues leading them to purchase organic products.

4.7 (IQ5) How do your beliefs or attitude influence your choice for organic products? Any environmental beliefs? Strong feelings for the product?

Description and analysis of comments

In summary, beliefs or attitudes regarding concerns about the environment seemed to be a major influencing factor when purchasing organic products. Three quarters of respondents referred to some environmental belief that influenced their choice for organic products. Respondents gave many different environmental and health reasons for their beliefs and attitudes. Many statements applied to local issues, while others applied to the Australian environment.

Low consumption group's views. In more detail, the lower consumption group beliefs about the environment and health factors were important with

one group discussing mainly health factors and the other environmental factors.

Some respondents in the lower consumption groups had definite beliefs that without organic food the *next generation would suffer*. Respondents stated the sprays from farms growing normal food were in the atmosphere, our river systems and drifting into other areas and damaging soils. Comments included:

> '…we should aim for the future of having organic life, in many aspects, otherwise the next generations are going to go down as weird element, fatigue and so on'.

‘I do not like the ways sprays are getting into our river systems, into the air, drifting into other areas, for example, crop spraying . Not only that a lot of them are damaging the soils’.

One group of low consumption respondents had strong beliefs regarding the *benefit of organic food to a consumers health.* One consumer who was a breast cancer victim had strong beliefs of the medical benefits of organic food. One respondent stated the sprays were systemic. Comments from consumers related their beliefs regarding spraying on farms, and additives to food, to illnesses caused by the inorganic substances getting into the body systems. These comments included:

‘I have associated with people with breast cancer since, and they are obsessed by organic food’.

‘The minute they started spraying the cotton, the people are just dropping’.

‘We are getting inorganic substances in our systems’.

‘...it is all being pumped at the growing stage with growth hormones. Antibiotics are being used as a growth promotion because the poultry producer has got a time table’.

‘I believe that these growth promotants which have been present since the early 50’s or even earlier are going into our young children which is causing our young children to grow faster than previous generations’.

‘…the fruit and vegetable in particular is so bad…..and there is more junk food as in fast food takeaway….which is making the general populations health poor so there are plenty of medical implications’.

‘Most of the sprays that are used on fruit and vegetables are systemic’.

Respondents in the lower consumption groups commented on the *superior marketing techniques* used by the shops *in regard to normal foods*. In particular they commented on presentation used by shops to sell vegetables and fruit that were not organic and were generally tasteless. One respondent stated that McDonalds should be forced to serve only organic food so that the children would know what was good food. Others

believed they were 'being fooled' by the marketing techniques. Comments regarding marketing of normal foods included:

> 'The vegetables in the shops look lovely and the tepid lights and arranging things around them...have we forgotten what's there for sale.'
>
> '…marketed beautifully…I think I am being fooled'.
>
> 'I think the world would be much happier if it would force McDonalds to just push out all organic stuff cause that would get it to the root level of the tree…'.

In the lower consumption group one respondent stated they had an *attitude towards nuclear damage* in Europe and did not purchase products coming from those areas at the time. Other respondents stated 'I still won't buy anything from anywhere around those areas'. These respondents were unsure if they included organic products in their decisions not to purchase. Negative comments about the Chernobyl nuclear disaster and effects on agriculture in Europe were recorded. This included not wanting to purchase products from those areas. Statements included:

> 'I would have a bit of an attitude towards when Chernobyl blew up and wiped out agriculture in Europe'.
>
> 'I still won't buy anything from anywhere around those areas by that time it would have reached Australia after three months'.

High consumption group's views. In turn, all respondents in the higher consumption groups held strong beliefs about *environmental damage from chemicals* used in normal crop production leading them to purchasing organic foods. Others related damage to pollution's from other sources. Some respondents indicated a need for 'a wider responsibility to the entire environmental system' while others discussed damage from the local cotton industry and polluted water and waterways in Australia. Many thought the methods of agriculture needed to change and related this to the local cattle industry and recycling nutrients. All respondents felt these environmental beliefs were contributing to their decision to purchase organic food.

Beliefs of respondents in the higher consumption group included statements regarding *damage to the whole universe* from the production of normal products. Respondents stated these beliefs were positively influencing their decision to purchase organic

products and stated ‘we should be doing something’. Comments regarding concern for the environment included:

> ‘I’ve got a fundamental belief that I am connected to everything in the universe’.
>
> ‘I just like to cap the world to be good, nothing destroyed’.
>
> ‘The whole world has been run down except human beings and you know and new products are bringing in a lot of money’.
>
> ‘They say it is all the pollution …we should be doing something’.

One group of high consumption respondents were concerned about *excessive spraying in the cotton industry* damaging the river systems and felt these beliefs influenced their choice for organic products. They recounted stories of bug counting, careless spraying, and damage to the water and native fish in the river systems indicating that the damage would be present for generations to come. Some respondents believed that this sort of damage would be minimised through a better choice of fibre crop that did not need sprays. All respondents in the high consumption groups indicated the

organic methods of production would be preferable and such beliefs on the damage from the cotton industry were positively influencing their decisions to purchase organic products. Comments regarding the damage from the cotton industry leading them to purchase organic products were as follows:

> ‘they spray the cotton and people who live near go through terrible things and they have and yet because it is big money the Government doesn’t seem to worry’.
>
> ‘The cotton industry gets away with things that no other industry in Australia will because they are supposedly saving the economy in this region’.
>
> ‘they might be creating a lot of employment but what they are doing is they are wrecking it and they are wrecking it for round about ten or twenty generations at least to come’.
>
> ‘the biggest problem with the fishing, fishery, the inland fishery stock of Australia, is the cotton industry because of the pesticide run off from that particular industry’.

Some respondents from focus group 3 were concerned with the *quality of water* and the damage to Australian waterways. Comments regarding quality of water included 'we are just wrecking the water' and 'there are very few places where there is clean water'. Respondents stated beliefs on damage to waterways and the water was a motivating environmental factor that positively influenced their purchase of organic products.

> '…even rainwater isn't as pure as that'.
>
> '…as it (rainwater) collects herbicides out of the air as it passes through it'.
>
> '…most of the major environmental problems we have in Australia are salinisation and the Murray Darling system cost billions of dollars…to rectify what's caused by disregard and abuse of environment using chemical fertilisers constantly'.
>
> 'You go and put in dioxin to the river here and some poor mungrel down in Adelaide will be drinking it'.

Respondents in one high consumption group felt their beliefs on *environment* issues led them back to the health issues and the need for organic products. One respondent said the beliefs that led to purchasing organic food were 'getting back to healthy things like we had 40/50 years ago'. Others believed there needed to be more organic products available and they needed to be more affordable. Respondents comments regarding non-organic food that was considered inferior quality and returning to healthy foods like there was years ago were:

> '…food products that we buy are not only not good for you, constantly bad for you that's all pretty sure that if you get organic stuff they are pretty safe products'.
>
> '…but basically I feel if we can get back to healthy things like we had 40/50 years ago we would perhaps be better off'.

Another respondent in the higher consumption believed there were a number of *certifying bodies* in Australia all doing different things. This respondent remarked: 'there are several in Australia and they all try to do all these different things.(certifying

agencies). One respondent believed that *knowledge* of the organic industry was lacking, stating 'I don't think we are told enough'.

In the higher consumption groups one respondent had particular *religious beliefs* which influenced their preference for purchasing organic products. These beliefs included respect for the individual and led the consumer to preference for other products. Another respondent had been a vegetarian and expressed a need to kill the meat product herself if she was going to eat it. Statements regarding religions beliefs included:

> 'Particularly religious beliefs and respect for the individual and other religious beliefs that will lead you to a preference for a product'.

One respondent in the higher consumption group believed their need to purchase organic food, was more about *quality of the product* indicating organic products were

better. This respondent stated: '…it is more about quality its just better….the product'.

All group's views. Others in focus group 1 and 3 believed they purchased organic products because of *damage to the soil* through chemicals being used and trace elements remaining when producing non-organic products. For example, one respondent stated commercial growers think that they only have to use chemicals for a product to grow and 'forget about all the trace elements'. Another participant stated he believed agricultural methods have got to change. Negative comments on agricultural methods for normal foods included damage to the soil, damage to the food chain, and irreversible damage for future generations. Comments were as follows:

> '…what you do just by putting fertilisers on, chemical fertilisers that is, on you soil, is that you start killing most of the macrobiol of the soil… when you start losing the structure in a soil it usually blows away'.
>
> '…if they used poisons to stop certain kinds of insects then they are stopping the food that another sort of insect would be feeding on and it is a vicious circle'.

> ‘If we don’t stop the type of agriculture that we have got now our children and our grandchildren and great grandchildren are not going to have much at all in years to come. We eventually have to improve’.

Some respondents believed *organic soil was better for the cattle industry*. Respondents commented that nutrients could be recycled and costs would be reduced for farmers who did not have to buy chemicals. These positive comments on organic methods of production included:

> ‘…with pasture too the cattle if the pasture has really been well fed organically the weight of the earthworks underground should equal the weight of the cattle on top’.
>
> ‘A farmer who has that many earthworms in his soil doesn’t need to worry about that, so eventually the cost to him in terms of probably not having to buy chemical fertiliser that goes down’.
>
> ‘Well nutrients basically get recycled’.

Some respondents stated if everybody *contributed ‘in a small way’* it would be good for the environment. Comments on contributions included encouraging people to ‘do good things’ and ‘educating of children’. One respondent stated she only wanted to pay money for people to do good things. Respondents stated such contributions would include making positive decisions towards purchasing organic food. Comments included:

> ‘…in a small way whatever we could do a lot of us are just in a small way we will make it eventually’.
>
> ‘… if we educate children you know’.
>
> ‘I hate to encourage people to do bad things I don’t want to give them money to do bad things I want to give them money to do good things’.

Some respondents believed that organic food could be identified through *appearance* of ‘grubs’ present in the food. Others believed identification of organic products could be made through marks on the product or such things as ‘…corn with a jacket’. Comments on appearance included organic produce with grubs, blemishes and marks and included:

'…put it in some water and let them (the grubs) rise to the top - at least you know there are no sprays'.

'I think you have to accept that there are some blemishes on the skin of the produce and that is to be unavoidable because insects land on them'.

'Marks on products is a guarantee of organic'.

'Corn with a jacket must be organic'.

Other respondents believed you could tell a product was organic from the *higher price* charged for the product. This respondent stated 'I believe organically grown foods fetch a premium price'.

Other respondents indicated people globally are showing a *rebellious attitude to non organic food* that is being produced at the expense of the pristine rainforests in South America. This respondent also referred to the riots in London regarding over food production and in Germany against McDonalds regarding fast food.

'…we have got football fields per day of pristine rainforest being destroyed in South American countries to grow the cattle to suit'.

'…is rebelling against them'.

Interpretations

Three quarters of respondents indicated their beliefs or attitudes regarding concerns about the environment was a major influencing factor when purchasing organic products. One group of low consumption respondents discussed health reasons for their beliefs and attitudes. Many statements applied to local environmental issues, while others applied to the Australian environment. Some respondents in the lower consumption groups referred to global environmental problems and riots regarding normal food quality. Respondent believed that 'if every did their little bit' it would help the environment. Minor beliefs included religious beliefs,

Minor issues included religious beliefs, beliefs about lack of knowledge, and beliefs that there were many different certifying agencies. Respondents in the low consumption

group commented on the exceptional marketing techniques used to promote normal food being detrimental to organic food. Some respondents commenting on their beliefs regarding the inferior appearance and excessive price of organic vegetables.

4.8 (IQ6) How do you perceive the products when making a decision to purchase and what expectations or performance do you expect to gain from the purchase?

Description and analysis of comments

In summary, respondents in three focus groups perceived that taste, quality and appearance of organic products were major factors when making a decision to purchase. Some consumers expected organic food 'to be nice and fresh and last longer' while others stated it would not last longer. Others saw organic food as 'being superior' and 'to gain a good eating experience'. One consumer stated that even though organic food was picked when close to being ripe 'they do seem to last better'.

All group's views. In more detail, positive comments on taste came from three focus groups and included one respondents negative comment regarding the taste of organic meat. Comments on *taste* specifically centred on the higher quality of apples and the 'intense flavour' of tomatoes, their 'colour and texture' and the taste of bananas. One respondent stated 'the bananas actually have a taste'. Comments were as follows:

'…a big factor with tomatoes is the taste'.

'…organically grown products taste better and smell better'.

'…if a fruit and vegetable is being grown properly it will taste better' .

'…nobody notices the difference unfortunately in terms of the organic meat'.

Many respondents made negative comments regarding the *taste of non-organic food*. Respondents stated people have been cultivated to accept the terrible tasteless normal food including tasteless apples, tasteless fruit, and stone fruit. Comments included:

> '…normal apples that are absolutely tasteless'.
>
> 'I know that the fruit (normal fruit) that looks attractive in the shop has got no taste or particularly the stone fruit from last season was revolting'.
>
> '…we have been cultivated to accept a less than perfect produce. It looks good but it tastes terrible.'

Other respondents perceived the *quality and nutrition* of organic food as important issues when deciding to purchase organic products. One respondent perceived the organic vegetables 'don't look the quality'. Comments on quality included expectations of quality clean and healthy organic food, clean green and nutritious food, and food with nutrient taste, including:

> 'It's a product perhaps higher quality than what you buy otherwise'.
>
> 'I expect to have quality clean healthy'.
>
> '…that it is you don't require the food to be delicious all the time and be content with nutrient taste'.
>
> 'My expectations are that I am buying something that is clean and green it is nutritious so that is personal selfish reasons'.

Other respondents compared organic products to normal products sold in supermarkets. Perceptions from respondents included negative comments on *appearance* of organic food, positive comments on appearance of normal food. These statements included comments on appearance of organic food such as:

> 'Fruit is blemished'.
>
> 'Must be insect or fungal damage or I would be suspicious'.
>
> '…organic stuff does not look as good than stuff that is bred to look good and travel well'.

'…even though they (organic food) might be smaller and probably less attractive to look at than the ones that are grown as hybrids or chemicals'.

Low consumption group's views. In turn, respondents in focus group 1 made both positive and negative comments regarding the *length of life* of organic products. Some stated the products would last longer while others stated the product would only last a natural length of time, or shorter time. Respondents comments on length of life of organic products included:

'I would expect it to be nice and fresh and last longer than what we normally get'.

'I seem to think that the organic things do last better because even though they are picked when they are close to being ripe'.

'Actually I wouldn't expect it to last longer because the inorganic ones that have been bred for long shelf life'.

'Your naturally grown thing won't last longer but it will last its normal length. Has a normal life. The inorganically grown product is going to last longer because it has been developed to do that'.

'The stuff you buy in a shop must have been held in storage... cause it only lasts a shorter time or it seems to'.

Some respondents in focus group one perceived that a product must be *certified* in order to make a positive decision toward purchasing organic food. Underlying reasons for certification were 'trust' and 'reassurance'. Comments included:

'I don't think I would buy unless I know it is certified - it is coming from a farmer or a grower that has got a number and therefore I should be able to trust the fact that yes it is organic'.

'I like the agencies that are watching these people on our behalf and its so reassuring to know that this company'.

Respondents in the low consumption groups perceived that *price* of organic products had a negative effect on decisions to purchase. One respondent indicated that people were more concerned of cost of products and diet than the chemistry of foods. Others had chosen non-organic products because of the high price of organic food.
Comments included:

> 'We are all thinking not the chemistry of it we are all thinking of money, cost or we all don't want to get too fat'.
>
> '…my main thing is the cost of organic food-- is the thing that would stop me from buying them'.

> 'I tried to get some to organic muesli bars but they are very expensive I would like to but price so I buy the one that is so much fat free'.
>
> '…bad for my wallet'.

Respondents in focus group 2 perceived organic food as a *healthy alternative* to the rest of the products on the shelf. Respondents stated that organic food was good for the environment, a healthier food source, and less health risk:

> '…that is good for the environment and good for my health'.
>
> ' I certainly perceive them as being a healthier form of food source'.
>
> 'Well just less health risk from eating 3000 different forms of chemicals sprayed liberally'.

Some respondents in focus group 2 and the higher consumption groups perceived they were '*doing good'* by buying organic products. Underlying reasons for 'doing good' included 'promoting and helping farmers', 'encouraging the sale' of products and making organic food more popular, and supporting the 'plant industry'. Other respondents stated they wanted 'to support the organic industry'. These statements included:

'the fact that you are doing good hopefully by buying organic food'.

'If people aren't going to support it (the organic industry), it will fade away'.

'I've a duty to support the organic industry with all its imperfections'.

'An action in favour of organic helps and one action leads to favouring the other bit'.

Interpretations

Taste, quality and appearance were perceived by respondents of three groups as being factors that would influence their decisions with respect to organic products. The majority of respondents commented on the superior taste and quality and inferior appearance of organic food. Many compared organic food to the inferior taste and quality and superior appearance of normal food. However negative appearance of organic food did not seem to deter respondents from purchasing organic food.

Some respondents in focus group 1 perceived certification of products would give them trust and reassurance in the products. Focus groups 1 and 2 indicated perception of price would negatively effect their decision to purchase. Two higher focus groups and focus group 2 indicated they were 'doing good' by purchasing organic food and perceived it as a healthy alternative to normal food.

4.9 (IQ7) What other factors influence your decision to purchase organic products? Your culture? Your family or social contacts?

Description and analysis of comments

Culture. In summary, all groups stated *culture* influenced their decisions to purchase organic produce. In summary, some respondents related culture to the Australian diet, while others related culture to their upbringing. Approximately 75 percent of respondents agreed *social and family factors* influenced their decision to purchase organic food products. In the lower consumption group, family, social, culture, personal, health and environmental concerns for the future were major influencing factors. In the higher consumption groups the changing Australian diet, culture, family, social , and environmental factors were influencing factors.

Higher consumption group's views. In more detail, approximately 70 percent of the higher consumption group related the *Australian culture,* particularly with reference to the changing Australian diet, as influencing their purchase decision. Some commented that the old Australian diet of 'Monday night rissoles and vegies, Tuesday night mince

on toast, Wednesday sausages and vegies, and then Sunday was a roast', had changed because 'people are becoming more aware of their health' and 'seeking better food'.

Some stated they had *changed from the standard Australian diet* because after investigating nutritional matters they had found 'you should eat as much raw food as possible'. According to one respondent this was considered sound advice from a

health point of view however they stated they liked food not to be sprayed with chemicals: 'I like it (food) not to be sprayed with chemicals probably contrary to the culture I was brought up altogether. I have just come to those conclusions myself'.

Comments regarding the new Australian diet as an influencing factor included changes from eating meat, to eating more chicken and fish, trying to eat more organic, and being 'better for you'. Statements included:

> '…consequently we are trying to eat a lot less meat more chicken and fish and more vegetables'.
>
> 'I'd really like to aim at eating a diet that would be 75% more (organic) and if we achieved that our health would improve out of sight.'
>
> '…in terms of your health and everything else it is probably better'.

Other respondents in the high consumption group referred to a general growing awareness of *health issues* influencing their decisions to purchase organic food. One respondent stated 'I think right from the time of twenty odd I started to have that awareness slowly growing on me. Health factors such as heart blood cholesterol and other things, increased awareness that 'the traditional British diet that we all had, wasn't necessarily a good one'. Others had changed their diet because of health reasons, culture, environmental reasons. They stated:

> '…culture plays an enormous role in what I pick but it has been modified because I have had poor digestion'.
>
> '…so for my case health was a big influence on top of culture'.

‘I think it is mainly the health reasons and the environmental reasons I grew up with a grazier’.

Other respondents in the higher consumption groups referred the *changing Australian culture*. As an example of changing culture, the respondent referred to television advertisements years ago that stated ‘how good butter was and how fresh and

wonderful it was, and showed them making the butter’. Respondents agreed that would never be shown on television now days.

Lower consumption group’s views. In turn, there were negative and positive comments on the family influence of the home vegetable garden towards purchasing organic products. The lower consumption group stated that culture was changing from the organic vegetable gardens in the back yard as time was limited. Some respondents related this to *cultural* influence and others to the *Australian way of life*. One respondent stated:

‘Working class culture in Australia was always toward providing your own food’.

Others commented on the widening *income* gap between rich and poor and that the only option left for the poor and unemployed will be ‘to produce their own foodstuffs’. However some respondents stated that now most parents had to work and there was little time for the vegetable garden to be grown at home. One respondent indicated that their grandparents having a vegetable garden encouraged their growing of organic produce, however the respondent stated:

‘ I can’t say it has had a lot of influence on my purchasing’.

One respondents commented that when they were growing up ‘everything tasted different and it was simpler’ with less variety in food lines. This respondent stated ‘I think we have gone too far. We have too many take away and all that sort of thing’. Comments on *culture* in the lower consumption group included:

'…the culture is changing and becoming faster, and the only way to beat stress is by eating healthily'.

'It all goes back to probably what I was brought up with and my grandmothers vegie garden. That! Ah! Cultural!'.

Others were influenced by *family* to purchase organic food because their parents had sent them to particularly purchase organic food, and their grandparents had had an organic vegetable garden in the past.

'The only help I got was from my mum she I don't know how many times she always talks about organic food and the hippy health food store'.

'…my mum was raised vegetarian you see all those years ago so all that tradition in our family coming down through my mum'.

Social. In summary, comments regarding social influences included reference group influence, books and media influence and negative comments on income and the high price of organic products.

All group's views. In more detail, *price* of organic products was a major issue with most groups. Respondents spoke of what they could afford, buying carefully, and keeping costs at a reasonable level:

'I buy the best that I can afford a day and I buy frequently and I buy carefully don't we!'.

'…that's the way you could actually supplement or actually afford to do organic buying that is if you had some things that you were producing yourself and then buy as well'.

'The ability of the community to accept organically grown things and to keep the cost at a reasonable level'.

Other statement referred to influence from *books* that respondents had read and *media* influence. Statements included:

> 'Dr Walkers books I've bought about all of them'.
>
> 'Television has a bit to do with it too its the media'.

Some respondents indicated they had been influenced by *reference groups.* These groups included 'like minded people' and politicians. One respondent felt the politicians that had been voted in had 'affected the beliefs of many people buying produce'. Comments from respondents on reference groups included being members of clubs and groups, and political influence:

> 'I have been in the Darling Downs Natural Growers Group it reinforces what I want to do'.
>
> '…having a group of like minded people is sort of helpful'.
>
> '…you get ideas'.
>
> 'I think we have got the Australian cycle we get the politicians we deserve, we get the produce we deserve. We have been too apathetic in the past'.

Low consumption group's views. In turn, one respondent in the low consumption group had been influenced *social contacts* which was by peer pressure from friends. She stated:

> '…peer pressure from your friends hanging out with them at the time you know late seventies a lot of my friends were in the organic and it was commonplace'.

Others stated they would not be influenced by anyone.

> 'I would not be influenced by anybody else it is my own belief and knowledge all the knowledge I could obtain that would coax me in whatever plan I would take'.

Some respondents in the lower consumption groups indicated *income* was limited by the fact they had families and this negatively influenced their purchasing of organic food. One respondent commented:

> '…now days a lot of my friends have got families and they can't afford to put the money into organic'.

Personality. One respondent indicated her *personality* led her to make buying decisions toward organic products because desire to cook with different flavours. She stated:

> 'I enjoy the challenge of time to work with the flavours and work with the different things'.

Interpretations

All groups stated *culture* influenced their decisions to purchase organic produce. Some respondents related culture to the Australian diet, while others related culture to their upbringing. Approximately 70 percent of the higher consumption group stated the Australian culture, particularly with reference to the changing Australian diet influenced their decisions to purchase.

About 75 percent of respondents agreed *social and family factors* influenced their decision to purchase organic food products, while others related their influence to reference groups. In the lower consumption group, family, social, culture, personal, health and environmental concerns for the future were major influencing factors. Price of organic food was a major deterrent with most groups while others referred to lack of income affecting their decisions to purchase organic food. Personality was only relevant to one consumer who felt her cooking interest and desire to cook with flavours was leading he to organic purchasing decisions.

4.10 (IQ8) Does your lifestyle, age or situation influence your decision to purchase organic products?

Description and analysis of comments

Lifestyle. In summary, all of the groups were influenced in their purchasing decisions by lifestyle. Reasons underlying lifestyle factors were faster lifestyle, healthy food in relation to medical conditions, changes in diet, and environmental problems.

In more detail, respondents in only three of the focus groups stated *lifestyle* influenced their decision to purchase organic products. In focus group 1 all respondents agreed that 'everybody's lifestyle has changed dramatically say over the past 20 years'. Reasons underlying choice for purchase of organic foods were based on 'lifestyle

being faster'. Respondents stated there was lack of time to grow organic produce, and changes in living quarters from the small town to bigger cities and units did not allow for growing of produce. Comments from respondents indicated a lack of time to search for the food, and a lack of time or space to have a vegetable garden. Respondents stated:

> '…the woman of the home who probably would have stayed home and gardened doesn't have these opportunities any more'.
>
> 'We are moving away from the small town thing into the cities'.

Others found *time* for shopping and searching for organic products was limited. Respondents used words such as 'enough time', 'limited', 'quick', and 'available' to indicate their lack of time shopping for organic products. Comments included:

> 'You never have enough time to do all the things in a day'.
>
> 'Lifestyle yes cause time for shopping is limited'.
>
> 'Lifestyle I guess it is the quick or the better - It has to be there and available or I am not going to bother as it takes too much time'.
>
> 'Just shop the organic food shop not got to 5000 shops and look around'.

Some of the respondents related lifestyle to ability to eat *healthy food*, without pesticides and herbicides discussing problems with additives that are put into food.

> 'I just want to have the ability to eat healthy food without pesticides and herbicides'.
>
> '…that a good healthy food nothing elaborate or bring me fresh fruit'.

‘They are adding a lot of things too, there is iron added to cornflakes and they are thinking of adding inoculation against polio or something and you eat it. So those sorts of things I don’t have a problem with those sorts of things being added’.

One respondent who had been a breast cancer victim related changes in lifestyle and diet to *medical problems.* This respondent stated:

‘…mine would be related to the medical things. I have undergone a dietary change since I have had a diagnosis of breast cancer but I’m good at breaking it too’.

Age. In summary, age was considered an influencing factor by all four groups with half of the respondents in the low consumption groups and all of the respondents in group 4 stating the need for more *healthy food* as they became older. Two 20 year old respondents in group 2 stated they had *little knowledge* of organic produce as their age was leading them more to social situation and higher income.

All group’s views. In more detail, both low consumption groups and group 4 stated as they became older organic food would be an important for *health reasons*. Some felt price and income would be determining factors when it came to purchasing the product as they grew older. Some stated:

‘…when you do get a bit older you tend to become more conscious of the silly things you did when you were young and the silly things you ate and drank weren’t doing you any good at all I am more aware of that as I get older’.

‘There is a saying if I had known I was going to live as long I would have better care of myself’.

‘…it may be a factor as we get older to be more introduced to the organic way of living’.

'…my age tells me that I would like to have what I like so if my economics allow me I would go out of the way to buy that better things'.

'Age, I think probably the age we are at now we start thinking about eating more healthily and it comes down to cost'.

'I'm looking at the next forty years are with me and I want those to be healthy and I don't want to become immobilised and I don't want end up with some diseases that seem to come on in the mid fifties age group which are like diabetes and heart disease and strokes and all those sort of things'.

'I have got this thing about trying to always look as healthy as possible within the boundaries of this financial stuff, and so, there is that element and that is probably going to be the thing that drives me more and more to looking towards organic food as time goes by, because I will be less keen on putting any of the 5 million chemicals and that in me'.

Two of the younger respondents in the low consumption group indicated that organic food was not a big factor for 20 year olds as society was pushing them towards a social situation and earning money. Another respondent in the high consumption group indicated he had been aware of organic food and use of chemicals on food since he was 18 years old. Statements regarding younger age groups included lack of interest in organic food and included:

'…at our age not a lot of people really know what organic food will be in the first place let alone bother to buy it'.

'…people that are around my age of 20 in the year 2000 are… this could not be a big factor for us for our society to us is moving towards your social situation and money, money, money'.

'I have had the same beliefs about the environment about eating organic food since I have been around 18 or 19 ….but I have know that you shouldn't use chemicals'.

Situation. In summary, answers across the four groups centred on *income situation and the cost* of organic produce. Three respondents in group 3 commented that now they lived alone they found it easier to afford organic produce as they had more available income. Many respondents in the lower consumption groups stated *market availability* of produce was a major influencing situational factor. Some stated this

was because of time limitations. Other factors of included negative and positive comments on additives in food.

All group's views. In more detail, personal factors of *lack of income* availability for purchasing organic food was evident throughout all groups. Some chose to grow products and purchase only what else they needed, others did not have enough money to purchase regularly. Some indicated they would like to purchase more organic food in the future when they no longer had to support a family.

> '…the situation that I really don't have enough money to buy it organic. I have got about enough money to keep me alive and keep my car running'.
>
> '…financial situation decides what I am getting each week. If I am richer I am getting more organic produce and if I am poorer I am not'.
>
> 'I am basically buying to supplement what we grow so it allows me to spend that little bit extra'.
>
> '...we have to really budget we just put a high priority to organic food and less priority to entertainment'.
>
> '….it is not that I can't afford to buy organic food I can't afford not to'.

Respondents in all groups stated their situation was influenced by the *price* of organic food being excessive and was a deterrent factor when making a decision to buy organic food. Some indicated when priced alongside normal products people tended to choose normal products whereas if purchased in an organic shop they would not compare prices as much and return for more products. Comments included comparisons between organic and non-organic food prices, and comparisons between purchasing non-organic products and the price put on health.

‘Interesting concept with organic and people see the eggs are $4 something and when the other are $1 something people don’t have a lot and get the cheaper product. But if you went or get use to an organic shop you just come back’.

‘…but not financially ridiculously feasible’.

‘Cost is half of it, cause you go to Woolies and see their produce and it is a lot cheaper than organic, so its a toss up on how much you have got to spend on organic food compared to professional food, and what price do you put on your health. You know its a… you’ve got to balance it’.

‘…can’t afford the organic stuff. Well, don’t prioritise the situation as a student’.

Many respondents remarked on the situation of *market access* being a deterrent factor. Others believed ‘If you can find somebody who sells them from their back yard you are laughing’. Comments referred to the need to access the products in supermarkets, access to organic shops being difficult, and the range of products available in supermarkets being limited. Comments included:

‘possibly we would buy it if it was introduced into the supermarket’.

‘it was actually in the supermarkets when I first came up … but it didn’t last for very long’.

‘so it is getting more and more into the supermarket and that’s when it becomes more broadly acceptable and easier to access’.

‘Just access to the shop to lousy’.

‘It is more feasible if the supermarkets would have one brand of shampoo that was organic and one brand of toilet paper that was organic or recycled’.

High consumption group’s views. Some respondents in the higher focus groups found the decision to purchase organic food had changed and they were now *living alone* and had more available money. Respondents stated their stage of life with no

children was allowing them to purchase organic products more frequently: Comments included:

> ‘I now choose to do it more than I could have chosen when I was trying to bring up my little boy’.
>
> ‘My sort of stage of life as opposed to my age, cause I am living by myself now’.
>
> ‘I don’t have any children and I have my own income to deal with… I choose to buy organic if I can’.
>
> ‘I think once I become independent. I’ve got kids at state school’.
>
> ‘Sons take all the money don’t they’.
>
> ‘So you are kind of restricted by money even though you are interested’.
>
> ‘I have got three very young children and I only wish I knew about organic food before they were born even’.

One respondent in the higher organic group commented that *religion* had influenced purchasing of organic produce. She stated ‘church also came in an influence at one time’.

Interpretations

All of the groups were influenced in their purchasing decisions by lifestyle. Reasons underlying lifestyle factors were faster lifestyle, healthy food in relation to medical conditions, changes in diet, and environmental problems. Age was considered an influencing factor by all four groups with half of the respondents in the low consumption groups and all of the respondents in group 4 stating the need for more *healthy food* as they became older. Two 20 year old respondents in group 2 stated they had *little knowledge* of organic produce as their age was leading them more to social situation and higher income.

Answers across the four groups centred on *income situation and the cost* of organic produce. Three respondents in group 3 commented that now they lived alone they found it easier to afford organic produce as they had more available income. Many respondents in the lower consumption groups stated *market availability* of produce was a major influencing situational factor. Some stated this was because of time

limitations. Other factors of included negative and positive comments on additives in food and comments on the influence of religion.

4.11 (IQ9) What process do you go through when deciding and purchasing the product?

Description and analysis of comments

***Problem recognition and habitual shoppers*.** In summary, all of the respondents were considered as having recognised they had a need for organic products when going shopping. All indicated at some stage they had recognised a need for organic products. In the lower consumption group one respondent considered herself as a 'lazy shopper'. This consumer stated 'I just go in, I buy what we need.' Others showed similar signs of habitual shopping practices with statements like 'I get it at the supermarket' or 'we just go to the organic shop'.

Some respondents indicated habitual shopping habits with certain products. One respondent stated he bought flour without looking at the price:

> 'But I always buy organic flour actually without looking at the price cause I know it is not going to be too much more than the regular flour'.

Others recognised the need for organic products and moved on to usage situation and a more involved decision process. These respondents indicated reasons for usage situation or showed signs of evaluation of alternatives.

Interpretations

Many respondents in all groups indicated they recognised there was a need for organic food. Some were either habitual purchasers knowing what they intended to purchase and therefore just went and purchased their needs. This involved a limited decision making process. Others were lazy shoppers or did not go out of their way to particularly purchase organic products indicating a nominal decision making process. However many respondents were more involved shoppers and moved on to situation analysis and evaluation of alternatives before purchasing products.

Situation Analysis. In summary, most of the respondents indicated they were environmentally conscious consumers or health conscious consumers when considering their usage situation for organic products. Such awareness led consumers to particular choice of shop, or particular product choice. Some respondents had difficulties with time availability, indicating communication situation problems. Others suggested the price of organic food relative to financial situation influenced purchasing decisions for organic products. Other factors influencing situation included diet choice, certification, availability and convenience, hunger, environmental concerns, and regular shopping practices.

All group's views. In more detail, many respondents in all groups indicated their *choice of shop* was influenced because of usage situation. Many visited the organic shop specifically to buy organic produce. Others purchased organic products that they knew were available in the supermarket. Comments indicated consumers knew where to purchase certain products:

> 'I will often grab the organic flour in the supermarket'.
>
> '…like beans or mace normally I get at the supermarket'.

Then, some consumers indicated they were aware of where to purchase organic products and whether they were available. Comments regarding *location* of organic food included purchasing at the organic shop or supermarket:

> '…when I am buying organic I just go to the organic shop instead of the supermarket'.
>
> '…we have certain things we just go to the organic shop for and nowhere else'.
>
> 'I tend to get what I can find first from either of the (organic) shops if I can park at them'.
>
> 'I get them from the health section of the supermarket'.
>
> 'I am in the habit of going to the supermarket I guess'.

‘Up the Sunshine Coast is a really good organic shop and from time to time I drop in there and do a big shop’.

‘There was a shop in town years ago in Toowoomba I use to go to all the time because it was handy to where I worked organic shop’.

Many respondents in both high and low consumption groups indicated their situation with *lack of time* influenced their purchase decisions Words used such as ‘grab’, ‘quick’, ‘limited’ and ‘busy’ indicated some respondents spent little time with their purchase decisions. Respondents stated:

‘I only have a limited time to go’.

‘I don’t have enough time to hunt everywhere for everything so if I can’t then I hit Woolies’.

‘Trying to minimise the hours in my day and weeks in my life that I devote to food purchase’.

‘I don’t spend much time sort of buying or shopping’.

‘I don’t have the patience or the time to sort of shop around’.

Moreover, some respondents in all groups indicated the situation regarding *price* of products was an important determinant of decision to purchase organic food. Respondents in focus groups 2 and 3 checked the price of products before deciding to purchase. Others supplemented their purchases with organic food from their gardens in order to reduce the amount of organic products that they needed to purchase. Comments also included respondents purchasing organic foods when they are on ‘special’. Comments from respondents were mainly about the high price of organic food as a negative influencing factor:

‘We can put in our budget that we haven’t got enough so we end up going to Woolies or somewhere, and then supplement it with what you have got out of your own garden’.

‘…they will often have the organic meat on special so I will grab that’.

‘…we all spend initially but price is the bottom line most people just have x number of dollars to spend on their groceries each week’.

‘…if they are on special I am going to grab them’.

Some respondents in focus groups 2 and 3 made negative statements about *convenience* in locating organic food. Some complained of parking facilities at the organic shop, some complained about the limited hours that the shop was open. Others just wanted to purchase organic products in the supermarket and were not prepared to do another trip to specifically purchase organic food. Some stated that more often than not they did not find organic food. Two respondents in focus group 2 referred to the inconvenience of being unable to obtain sections of organic chickens because chickens were only sold whole. Comments regarding the convenience of organic food included:

> 'I do not go to the organic shop because of the inconvenience mostly'.
>
> 'Convenience is one thing to me on the way home from work the organic shop is probably shut and I have to go to Coles or somewhere'.
>
> 'The issue of tracking it down - there is inconvenience if it is not in the supermarket - to do another shopping trip to buy specifically organic'.
>
> 'I know what's on the supermarket shelves basically, so I know where I am going to find organic stuff, and I am not, and it's mostly not'.
>
> '…there is no point my buying the whole chicken there is no cut up with organic chicken'.

Many respondents indicated they already had a knowledge of what they wanted to purchase and some regularly purchased certain food items. Some respondents made buying decisions in accordance with 'needs' which included diet needs. Others regularly shopped for organic products. Statements included:

> 'I buy what we need'.
>
> '…then week by week shop for organic fresh fruit and vegies'.
>
> 'With fresh foods of course I will go more regularly because I buy smaller lots more often to try and get as fresh as we can'.
>
> 'I have certain things to buy. I know one thing. I'd like to buy organic broccoli but they have been sprayed a lot'.

Some respondents commented on their *usage situation* from the point of *hunger* and *environmental concerns*:

> ‘Is it going to satisfy my hunger or is it going to wreck the environment those are the two things I look at’.

One respondent stated a they would choose a product if they noticed it was *certified* while another considered certification a waste of time. This respondent stated:

> ‘I would go for the ones that are certified cause I feel confident then that they are truly organic’.
>
> ‘I am not going to consider wasting my time reading labels just to be fooled again’.
>
> ‘I don’t look at labels’.

Interpretations

In brief, respondents showed they were environmentally conscious consumers or health conscious consumers when considering their usage situation for organic products. Such awareness influenced particular choice of shop, or particular product choice. Time availability and the high price of organic food relative to income situation influenced purchasing decisions for organic products. Other factors influencing situation included diet choice, certification, availability and convenience, hunger, and regular shopping practices.

Information search. In summary, respondents searched for information on labels and in magazines for health and diet reasons. Others searched for certification or the organic product. One respondent did not find organic products. Some respondents searched for Australian owned and grown produce and food without additives.

In more detail, some respondents indicated they searched for information on *labels* and in magazines. Diet and health factors were reasons for their information search. Comments included:

'…but the primary purpose is looking at labels or knowing what is in them so that they conform to my dietary requirements'.

'…things that you know you want and think that are right for your diet and your health'.

'These people belong to choice magazine so they have a really great knowledge of everything out there in the marketplace. You have already done what you need to do in the car'.

Comments from respondents indicated some search for information and are more confident when they find products *certified*. Statements included:

'Oh, I search it out! There are lots of grains around now soy products for instance, some and certified and some aren't'.

'…when you are buying meat at Coles it is nice to know now that there is an organisation that is grading it'.

'…but it is nice to know some umbrella group is attaching a label if it is true'.

Some just *search for the organic product*. Words used included 'go looking for', 'try to find', 'spend a little more time', 'hunt a little harder' and 'go to more effort.' Comments included:

'I try to find the organic product if I can'.

'I usually go looking for about a fortnight's supply of stuff'.

'I tend to spend a little more time and hunt a little harder'.

'I go to more effort'.

'Usually it jumps out at you if its organic something on the shelf and I look for that first'.

'…cause they are organic you give them a few extra points and buy them'.

'…say I am wanting to buy orange juice, I will go looking through that dairy'.

Some *do not find* organic food. Comments from this respondent indicated she did not find organic products in the supermarket where she usually shopped:

‘I shop at a major supermarket and …don’t really see, they don’t have things there that are organically grown as far as I am aware’.

Others look for *Australian owned and locally grown*, or food without additives. Comments related to Australian owned and grown organic products being preferable along with those without additives in the product:

‘I look for a good product for example if I am going to buy fruit and vegetables. If I am going to buy things like orange juice, I first of all look for something that is Australian owned and grown’.

‘I look to see what the additives are see if there are any additives’.

Interpretations

In brief, many respondents across all groups searched for information on labels and in magazines for health and diet reasons. Others searched for certification or the organic product and one respondent did not these organic products. Some respondents searched for Australian owned and grown produce and food without additives.

***Evaluation of alternatives*.** In summary, many respondents compared the *quality of organic products to the price* of normal food before making a decision to purchase. In the lower consumption group some respondents were attracted because the organic products were on ‘special’, others would pay up to ‘double the price’ for certain products.

In more detail, comments included weighing up cost versus quality, non-organic products price against organic product price, or special price versus non organic product price. They stated:

‘…a weighing up of *cost versus quality* and unfortunately my bottom line is still cost’.

‘…well, I think, and perhaps its on special - so you get a bag of apples for a few dollars, and even if they are a bit tired you might consider to stew them up or something’.

‘…rolled oats and things I will pay up to double the price than the regular rolled oats’.

‘Eggs I’m willing pay an extra $1 or $1.50 a dozen for organic free range eggs’.

‘I weigh them up *against the regular prices* of the non organic produce and if it is not too much more then I will go the organic straight away’.

Others compared *vegetable quality* to what products they were *growing at home.* Statements included comparing organic vegetables to home grown products and quality to price of non-organic food:

‘I look at their vegetables in Woolworths to see what they have got if its organic and how the other product *compares to what I am growing* that’s organic’.

‘…if you going to an organic shop then you buy lots of what seems quality when you are looking at it *perhaps the price* and you allow an extra 10 or 20 percent perhaps because its organic’.

‘I look at it very quickly I look at the price’.

Some respondents in the low consumption group decide whether to purchase organic food depending of the *feeling and taste* of the product. Respondents stated they tasted the food where possible and felt the produce. They stated:

‘I have a habit like the Asians to feel out things and if it feels good it perhaps it is good’.

‘You can take a grape. I think that is still allowed. I’m not sure. I saw some look sideways. Yes, that would influence my purchase’.

Some respondents *look for signs* that the food is organic. This included grubs, blemishes, and evidence of cold storage. Comments included:

‘with the tomatoes well they look so nice and you think why they have not got grubs in them so I think you know they have been sprayed’.

‘I am looking for something that I don’t mind if it has some blemishes but as long as it is edible because you are paying a higher price’.

‘Things like pears that have been kept in cold storage well you know that they are rotten in the middle and you don’t buy them’.

Two respondents from high and low consumption groups were influenced by *children* in their decisions to purchase organic food. Comments included one respondent trying to find different products for the children to try, another respondent found she had to buy products according to children's likes and dislikes.

> '…things that I know that the kids will eat too. I buy and then we often try something a bit different especially in the fruit and vegetable line like if there are custard apples or something that the kids have never tried'.
>
> 'my children don't like chicken they don't like the certain parts of the chicken but drumsticks they don't eat the other like breasts so'.

Two respondents in the lower consumption groups commented on their method of evaluation being influenced by the *convenience of products* being available in portions. In particular respondents commented on organic chicken not being cut up. One respondent stated 'organic chicken they don't cut it up.'

Many respondents *took a few minutes* to evaluate the organic products. One respondent indicating that she *did not have the time* to check things out. Some stated they evaluated the products and they don't go blindly. They will have a look and turn it round. One respondent did not have the time. Comments included:

> 'It could take me a few minutes to buy a few tomatoes'.
>
> 'I just don't go blindly'.
>
> '…Oh, they will have a look, or turn it around and have a look, I do a bit too'.
>
> 'I haven't got that sort of time to check it but they do' (the Asians).

Interpretations

In brief, respondents evaluated the *quality of organic products to the price* of normal food before making a decision to purchase. Others compared the price of organic products to non-organic products. Some compared the organic food to their home grown produce. In the lower consumption group some respondents were attracted

because the organic products were on ‘special’, others would pay up to ‘double the price’ for certain products, indicating they compared products to non-organic prices.

***Purchase intention*.** Some respondents showed a definite purchase intention regarding organic food. In the lower consumption group purchase intention had been low because of the influencing factors in particular the *high price* of organic produce and *income*. Some respondents however did indicate they would like to purchase organic food. In the higher consumption group many respondents indicated their *regular* purchase intention. Comments involved availability, and favourable comments regarding purchase intention:

‘If they are available I will buy them’.

‘I would like to buy the organic food’.

‘I always have to buy’.

Interpretations

In brief, many respondents had a purchase intention with regard to organic food. This was occurring more frequently in the higher consumption group than the lower consumption group. Some of the lower consumption group did not indicate regular purchase intentions. Price and income seemed to be the major deterrent factors.

4.12 (IQ10) What would you like to change in the organic market that would improve your purchasing of products?

Description and analysis of comments

In summary, the reasons underlying suggestions for change were market control, market price, handling of products, market access, farming incentives, education and the environment. The responses of both high and low consumption groups were similar in suggestions for change. The lower consumption group were concerned with market price, market access, education and control. The higher consumption group

suggestions centered on market control, environmental factors, handling of produce and market access.

All group's views. In more detail, respondents in both high and low consumption groups indicated that the *price* of organic food was excessive and the reasons given included the smallness of the industry and poor distribution systems. Suggestions were made regarding changes to the price of organic food. Comments from respondents in both high and low consumption groups were concerned with negative aspects of higher price of products. These included:

> 'If it (organic food) was cheaper, I would buy organic over the top of everything else'.
>
> 'More people doing it till the price came down'.
>
> 'Like a pricing control you can trust'.
>
> 'I would not mind it a little bit more expensive but most of it is a lot more expensive'.

Approximately 75 percent of all groups commented on *market access*, which included lack of supply, poor distribution and lack of resources. Some suggested the supply network 'needed to be bigger as well as fresher, and this should make it cheaper'. Others felt the 'distribution systems need to be worked out'. The distances the product has to travel, and the fact that this added to cost and poorer quality food, were a major reasons underlying statements suggesting change to more local produce. For example:

> 'The supply network needs to be bigger as well. Like if it is grown around this area really fresh and cheaper, it should actually be cheaper'.
>
> 'The marketing I think is purely scatter fish because they are small business and they probably don't have the resources to get good advice on marketing'.
>
> 'I think probably the only reason why it's expensive is because very little is grown around here. It has to be brought in from a long way, and it costs a lot of money'.

Respondents in both high and low consumption groups indicated they would like to change the system so there was only *one standard* for organic food in Australia.

Comments included standardising procedures for certification, stricter control, more Government control, and one Australian standard:

> ‘Making an Australian standard right through…..there should be one body for Australia, saying if it is stamped with this stamp, you know this is the set of guidelines that the food is grown on’.
>
> ‘They should standardise the procedures for certification’.
>
> ‘Stricter control like that nitrate in wine’.
>
> ‘More government control’.

Other respondents in both high and low consumption groups suggested changes could be made to the industry if money was paid into converting conventional farms into organic farms, or *government assistance* was granted to organic farmers. Comments suggested government assistance and money be paid into converting farms. For example:

> ‘You have got to be prepared to put money into converting farms into organic’.
>
> ‘Like they pay into traditional farming systems to get them going…. It needs to have that support’.
>
> ‘It’s very difficult for producers to produce organic stuff. It has got to be probably more government encouragement financially’.

> ‘We have got the multinationals and they are very powerful and they are into genetically modified foods and so forth, and there is quite a bit of competition if anyone wants to produce something organic’.
>
> ‘I think having organic products as the predominantly available foodstuff instead of the way it is now’.
>
> ‘I think that if the government were to say, give its blessing or put up structures whereby it becomes more mainstream, unless specialist privileged’.

High consumption group’s views. In turn, fifty percent of the higher organic consumption group commented on *presentation* and *handling* of organic produce.

Respondents suggested change in *quality control*, could be attained by marketing more local produce. This would allow for better presentation and handling. Concerns were expressed that most of the stores selling organic produce were lacking in facilities for cold storage and had a casual approach to presentation of produce.

> 'Greater quality control in fresh produce, better handling I think, nicer presentation would not kill them. Usually you see a bunch of picked over looking stuff'.
>
> 'If they don't come in fresh it is generally not his fault its the fact that they have been sent down to the markets in Brisbane and it has been in their cold room for the last two weeks'.
>
> '…not enough that things are fresh they have to look fresh and edible and with this local grown stuff cause a lot of fresh fruit doesn't travel'.
>
> 'If fresh fruit and vegetables are grown locally there is a better chance that the growers can grow varieties that don't have to withstand the rigours of travelling a thousand shore metres'.

Some respondents in the higher consumption group suggested *changes to imports* and distribution of products long distance within Australia. One of the respondents stated that it was up to the Government and politics to say no to these markets in order than local produce would survive. Respondents objected to the importing of products that could be locally grown. Comments included:

> 'I think of the amount of energy consumption it takes to ship stuff I really, really resent buying Mexican garlic. Why? Why should I have to?'.
>
> 'I just can't understand while we have got import so much fresh food from long distances'.
>
> '…they should be big enough to stand up and say 'no', especially pineapples, citrus, kiwi fruit'.
>
> '…it goes back to Government'.

Other respondents stated a need for legislation saying 'everything is organic from now on in, that is the way you are going to do it'. This higher group of respondents suggested *pesticide use should be ceased* and mainstream industry should have strict

controls and guidelines. These respondents indicated a need for change firstly because 'the knowledge of damage from chemical use has been around for 40 years' and also because the 'later generations are going to suffer' from this damage. For example:

> 'I would like to see pesticides outlawed basically'.
>
> 'The point I am trying to make is this is the stuff that they are pumping out daily still'.
>
> 'The year 2000 we are still doing this and we have known it has been bad for us since the late sixties. Why are we still doing it?'
>
> 'It is the general other mainstream industry and they should have very, very strict controls and guidelines and at the moment they don't'.

In the higher consumption group suggestions for change included forming a *cooperative* to develop market crops independently, organising *organic buying groups*, ordering products over the *Internet*, household deliveries in refrigerated trucks, or Sunday and Saturday organic markets. One respondent who was a small scale, commercial grower of organic products explained the difficulties of travelling to market with products to be sold at cooperatives. This respondent indicated an ideal

goal would be to sell in season, fresh produce directly to families. Suggestions as to changes in the organic food market included:

> 'I am all for coops, and I think that fresh vegetables is the only way to sell your stuff'.
>
> 'We have Sunday markets here. Why can't we have an organic Saturday/ Sunday markets?'
>
> 'There is a couple down in Sydney and Melbourne who do that. They are even as far as being on the Internet and you can actually order what you want on the Internet'.
>
> 'They have a little cooperative buying group'.

Low consumption group's views. Next, the lower consumption group suggested *education w*as a major factor that would contribute to change in order to improve the purchasing of products. Respondents indicated a need for 'more customer

information', and 'education at school level' suggesting 'scientists with public profiles' could be used to promote the industry. For example:

> 'There should be education at school level. There probably is these days but unless you get onto it from an early age I don't think it is going to go on, because we know the multinationals they want their dollars so, to convert or change people's buying habits would have to be advertised and worked on'.

In the lower consumption group suggestions were made as to *convenience* and *access* of products. Respondents in focus group 1 suggested 'it would be more feasible if the supermarkets would have one brand of shampoo that was organic, and one brand of toilet paper that was organic or recycled'. Other respondents thought it would be nice 'to have a supermarket dedicated entirely' to organic food as well as larger organic food shops in shopping centres. One respondent commented: 'It's a pity there isn't a bigger one like in a major shopping centre, I think they would do alright'.

Some respondents in the lower consumption group suggested an *independent body* rather than a Government body for control of the marketing of organic products. Suggestions regarding change of control included formation of a Food and Drug Administration. For example:

> 'I am just wondering if the Government is the right agency to check on these things. Perhaps we need something like the Food and Drug Administration in America. They have a tighter control on how things are marketed…'.

Interpretations

In brief, suggestions for change included changes in market control, market prices, the handling of products, market access, farming incentives, education and the environment. Respondents in all groups indicated prices should be lower and the government should assist farmers to convert their farms from conventional to organic production. Approximately seventy five percent of respondents commented on the lack of supply, poor distribution and lack of resources in the organic industry.

The lower consumption groups further commented on the need for independent control for marketing organic products and the need for legislation. They also suggested education and better convenience and access to products. Further suggestions from the higher consumption groups included objection to imports of organic food, and formations of cooperatives or weekend markets for sell organic produce.

Conclusion

Chapter 4 describes and analyses the outcome of the focus groups discussions. Firstly, it described the participants who attended the focus groups and the arrangements what were organised. Secondly the focus group data was gathered and interpreted. All interview questions that were constructed for this research were examined and useful comments from the focus group participants which may not

directly apply to the interview questions, were reported. Such comments appeared to be useful in this research.

This chapter was divided into two sections. The first section described the methodological issues relating to how and from whom data was collected. Next, subsequently, methodological issues were discussed that relate to the analysis of the data. The second section examined the primary data or data gathered and assembled specifically for the study which was gathered through focus groups. Next, chapter 5 interprets the research findings and their implications.

5. Conclusion

5.1 Introduction

Chapter 1 identified the broad directions of the study and laid the foundations for the review. The research problem and research issues were introduced along with the important theoretical and practical implications. The gaps in the literature were identified and then the research was justified. The methodology was briefly examined and justified and the review outlined along with its delimitiations.

Chapter 2 established the theoretical foundations upon which the research effort was based. It reviewed extant literature and identified the research issues that needed to be addressed. The literature review was divided into three sections. Part A examined the current literature relating to the organic industry in Australia and addressed the Australian context of the industry and the industry confusion. Literature relating to the green consumer was also examined. It was found that none of the literature addressed the question of how consumers identify organic products in Australia. These gaps led to the first research issue in section 2.5.

RI 1: How do consumers identify organic products?

Secondly, part B introduced the theory of consumer behaviour and used this to build a theoretical foundation to identify the research issues for this research. The internalised factors of the consumer such as cultural, social and personal factors that influence consumer buying decisions were examined in section 2.8. Then the psychological factors that influence a persons buying decisions were examined. There was no literature found that considered all the internal factors influencing consumer behaviour of Australians towards organic products. Therefore these gaps led to the second research issue in section 2.10.

RI 2: *What internal factors influence the purchase decisions of Australian consumers to buy organic products?*

Part C reviewed the literature and theory relating to the consumer buying decision process. This process revealed a need to determine which purchase decision structure is more commonly used by Australian organic consumers and RI 3:

RI 3: *What is the purchase decision structure consumers use when purchasing organic products in Australia?*

This chapter built a theoretical foundation and identified three research issues from the extant literature and theory on consumer behaviour.

Chapter 3 established the validity of using focus group methodology to investigate the research problem 1. Qualitative and quantitative research methods were examined and the choice of focus group research was justified. A framework for focus group research was developed and the research problem was defined. The process of how the focus groups were developed and conducted was explained in seven steps. Limitations to the methodology were noted, and the research addressed the participants rights and all responsibilities regarding ethical collection of data. In brief, this chapter described the methodology used to collect data in order to answer the research problem.

Chapter 4 analysed the data and presented patterns of results for each research issue. Firstly, it described the participants who attended the focus groups and the

arrangements what were organised. Secondly the focus group data was gathered and interpreted. All interview questions that were constructed for this research were examined and useful comments from the focus group participants were reported. Such comments appeared to be useful in this research. This chapter was divided into two sections. The first section describing the methodological issues relating to how and from whom data was collected. Next, subsequently, methodological issues were discussed that related to the analysis of the data. The second section examined the primary data or data gathered and assembled specifically for the study which was gathered through focus groups.

This final chapter interprets the research findings and their implications. This chapter begins by examining the framework developed in section 2.7. Next conclusions about the research issues and the research problem are discussed along with implications for theory. Then the implications for policy and practice are determined. Limitations are noted along with implications for further research.

5.2 Conclusions about the research issues

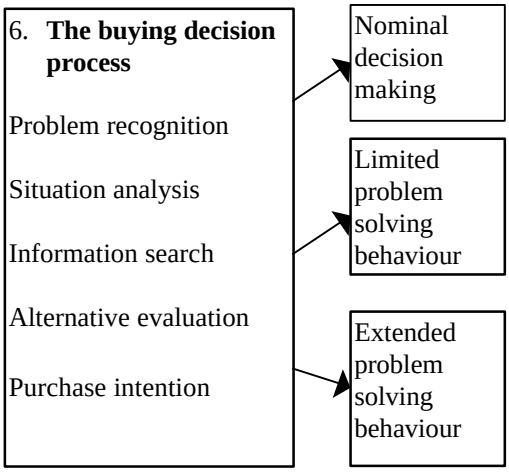
The framework developed in section 2.7 (figure 2.2) was derived from the literature and was based on a number of theoretical models and the literature from the Australian Organic Industry. Is this framework appropriate for explaining how and why consumers purchase organic products in Australia?

This question was addressed in the focus groups and findings from the groups are summarised in this section. The framework does assist in determining, confusion in the industry, factors that are important in the buying decision process and the buying decision process itself. However, some factors were not considered important and had not been included in the literature whereas others did not show a relevance with regard to buying decisions toward organic food. Internalised cultural and social factors influencing the consumer were not included as factors in the literature and proved to have a strong influence as consumer factors when it came to the buying decision process. Perception was not considered important in the literature and proved to be

an important factor. Emotional factors also seemed to be a driving force toward buying decisions.

The framework proposed the buying decision process involved problem recognition, situation analysis, search for information, alternative evaluation, and purchase decision (figure 2.2). In this research this framework did suit the buying decision process for extended problem solving behaviour however some consumers reported nominal decision making and more limited decision making behaviour when making their purchase decisions for organic food in Australia. Therefore a new framework was proposed for the buying decision process based on the model presented by Engel, Warshaw and Kinnear (1994) and Hawkins, Best and Coney (1998). This revised section of the framework is detailed in table 5.1. The following section describes the conclusions for each research issue with the findings from chapter 4 related to the literature review in chapter 2.

Figure 5.1 The revised buying decision process framework



Source: adapted for this research from Engle, Warshaw and Kinnear (1994) and Hawkins, Best and Coney (1998)

5.2.1 Research Issue 1: How do consumers in Australia identify organic products?

The first research issue was concerned with how consumers identify organic products in Australia and whether this was different to international consumers.

RI 1: How do consumers in Australia identify organic products?

There has been no consumer research undertaken in Australia previously on how consumers identify organic products (section 1.3) and confusion in the industry has led to some Australian consumers being unable to identify organic food (section 2.5). Consequently discussion of RI 1 has compared this research to studies on the state of the industry in Australia and International studies in order to determine what factors

are leading to consumer identification of organic products. In this research, previous studies in Australia on the state of organic industry, and international studies, will be compared according to the following:

- the definition of organic
- organic products produced in Australia
- the Australian organic industry confusion
- the ecologically conscious consumer.

Finally, the above mentioned research revealed that a *definition of organic* had been produced by the Organic Producers Advisory Council in Australia in 1992 (section 2.2). This had been produced to avoid conflicting and controversial definitions and descriptions of the word 'organic'(Dumaresq and Green 1997). This definition was detailed and of considerable length (OPAC 1992). Confusion over the meaning of 'organic' had also been revealed in International studies (Hutchins and Greenhalgh 1997).

In turn, findings from this research fully supported a *lack of knowledge* of this definition. Consumers gave no clear definition of the term 'organic' and showed in some cases a definite lack of knowledge (section 4.3). Some consumers in the lower consumption groups were confused as to what constituted 'organic food' while the higher consumption group did not list all factors of the definition. Indeed, confusion with the definition of 'organic' was evident. This may be because of the complex

definition given (section 2.2) and the lack of consumer knowledge of organic. This confusion would not positively contribute to consumer identification of organic products. Furthermore the higher consumption group indicated areas of the definition of organic needing further explanation not recorded in the literature (section 4.3). These areas included:

- chemicals from a natural source
- herbicides from a natural source
- chemical herbicide and chemical pesticide
- medium

A wide variety of organic products produced in Australia have attracted a lot of attention in the *literature* (Dumaresq and Green 1997; Hassall and Associates 1996; Twyford-Jones and Doolan 1998; Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation 1998). However the total volume of production is small compared with conventional production as only about 0.2 percent of total food sales in Australia is organic. (Dumaresq and Green 1997). This low demand indicates a *lack of knowledge* of the organic industry and the types of organic products available. Most of the organic products available in Australia have been identified in the literature (section 2.2).

In turn, in *this research*, consumers indicated a good knowledge of the variety of organic products available in Australia with approximately 90 percent of the types of products listed in the literature (Dumaresq and Green 1997; Hassall and Associates 1996) being identified by the groups. These findings are not consistent with the low demand for organic food (section 2.3) and indicate consumers have a good knowledge of the different types of organic products available however this does not necessarily lead to identification of the individual product as organic food.

The literature has identified four major impediments to the growth of the Australian organic industry which lead to *consumer confusion* (section 2.5). These impediments include failure to match growing of organic produce with end markets, fluctuations in supply, price disadvantage because of requirements for being an organic grower; and the general consumers having little appreciation of the benefits of organic produce

(Coutis and Ross 1997; Dumaresq and Green 1997; Wynen 1997). These impediments lead to three reasons for consumer confusion which include no guarantee of organic food being organic, multiplicity of logos inhibits understanding, lack of information on products (Wynen 1997; Hall 1997).

In turn, in *this research*, there was support of the first issue of 'no guarantee of organic being organic' with three quarters of respondents indicating they would have to rely on shopkeepers honesty and trust (table 5.2). Other more negative comments

included: 'use of the word organic when it isn't', and lack of trust in 'farmers', 'shopkeepers', and 'multinationals'. However comments on confusion with logos and lack of knowledge about organic food *were more evident in the lower consumption groups* indicating high organic consumers were less confused on the last two issues (section 4.3). The higher consumption group did support certification with many respondents indicating they would rely on certification or labels to guarantee the food as organic. Negative comments however from others indicated a lack of trust in labels and certification, and comments on many different types of certification. The lower consumption group indicated a general lack of knowledge and confusion as to what was 'organic'.

Table 5.2 The importance of consumer confusion

Reasons for consumer confusion	**Literature support**	**Research support**
No guarantee of organic food being organic	Yes	Yes
Multiplicity of logos inhibits understanding	Yes	In lower consumption groups
Lack of information on organic products	Yes	In lower consumption
Lack on knowledge on product types indicated in low demand	Yes	No
Consumer need for information-	Yes	In higher consumption group

Source: developed for this research from chapter 2 and 4.

Previous surveys in the United States indicated environmentally conscious consumers have a *need for information* about how to identify products with 54 percent reading labels occasionally and this figure rising to 95 percent for high involved environmentally conscious consumers (section 2.7). This was *not supported* in this research with nearly all respondents in the higher consumption group relying on the inferior appearance of the product and only half of the high consumption group looking at certification or labels (table 5.2). Only two respondent in the low consumption group indicated they looked at labels, with respondents indicating they were more concerned with 'trust' of shopkeepers.

Deterrent factors in identifying organic products recorded in literature on the Australian organic industry centred on the confusion over the term organic, the lack of information on products, the lack of knowledge of product types, no guarantee of organic food being organic, the multiplicity of logos which inhibits understanding (section 2.5) and environmentally conscious consumers having a need for information to identify organic products (section 2.7). All factors were recorded in the literature. In this research only the issues of no guarantee of organic food being organic and confusion over the term organic were *fully supported*.

Multiplicity of logos which inhibit understanding and the lack of information on products were *supported by the lower consumption groups* indicating a lack of trust along with consumer confusion in this area (section 4.3). The higher consumption groups did not support the multiplicity of logos inhibiting understanding as they indicated trust in certification and logos. Furthermore, these consumers *did not support* a lack of information on products as most had a good knowledge of organic food.

There was *no support* for the lack of knowledge of product types with many respondents all groups indicating a good knowledge of types of organic products available (section 4.3). This was not consistent with the confusion over the term organic but possibly could be explained by the technical detail needed in such a definition leading to consumer misunderstanding.

International studies on the environmentally conscious consumers having a need for information and consequently read labels (section 2.7), were *not supported*. Although 50 percent of higher consumption consumers indicated they read labels or looked for certification on labels, lower consumption groups relied more on trust of shopkeepers. Approximately half of respondents looked for the inferior appearance of organic produce to identify organic food (section 4.3).

In conclusion, the findings for the first research issue suggest that consumers were confused over the term 'organic' in Australia and most consumers relied on honesty and trust as a guarantee that the food is organic. Although the majority of consumers were aware of the types of organic products available, the lower consumption groups had little knowledge on organic food, and expressed a lack of trust in certification and labels. Approximately half of the respondents identified organic food from its inferior appearance. This view contrasts with the views of international studies.

5.2.2 Research issue 2: What internal factors influence the purchase decisions of Australian consumers to buy organic products?

The conclusion of RI 1 above revealed that consumers are confused about the term 'organic' and many rely on honesty, trust, and appearance to identify organic produce. In turn, the second research issue was concerned with internal factors affecting the decisions of Australian consumers when buying organic products.

> RI 2: *What internal factors influence the purchase decisions of Australian consumers to buy organic products?*

There has been no previous consumer behaviour research on internalised factors and internal factors undertaken in Australia so this discussion of RI 2 must compare this present research with the consumer research conducted in International studies (section 2.7). This International research identified the possible internal factors which may affect the decisions of consumers to buy organic products. The influence of these factors was investigated in this research and findings summarised in table 5.3.

Table 5.3 Internal factors influencing the buying decisions of consumers of organic food.

Internalised factors Consumer factors	Immediate discipline and literature	Findings of this research
Culture		X
Social		X
Personal factors	X	X

Psychological factors Consumer factors	Immediate discipline and literature	Findings of this research
Motivation and emotions	X (motivation only)	X
Perception		X
Learning	X	X
Belief and attitude	X	X
Personality		

Source: developed for this research

To examine this issue respondents were specifically asked questions relating to the factors above. The factors were divided into two parts with internalised consumer factors being examined first. Consumers gave many reasons for the importance of these factors the patterns of responses being listed in table 5.3. The elements leading to factors influencing the consumer in their buying decisions were coded and are listed in table 5.4. These elements were stated by respondents in sections 4.5 to 4.10.

Internalised factors influencing the consumer decisions in Australia for organic food

Culture. The first conclusion relates to internalised cultural factors affecting the purchasing decisions of Australian consumers to buy organic products (section 4.9). Only sparse literature on the Australian organic industry suggest that excessive price of organic products in conjunction with general apathy of Australians would lead to lack of demand for organic produce in Australia (Coutis and Ross 1997).

Elements leading to factors of influence for organic products

Elements	Culture	Social	Personal			Motivation	Emotion	Perception	Learning	Beliefs	Attitude	Personality
			Lifestyle	Age	Situation				Attraction			
Price		X-		X-	X-	X-	X-	X-		X-		
Promotion												
Product taste						X	X	X				
Product quality						X		X	x	X		X
Product appearance								X	x	X		
Product availability					X-							
Social contacts	X	X										
Family	X					X			X			
Reference groups		X				X			X			
Personal age												
Personal income	X	X		X	X							
Personal lifestyle			X	X-	X							
Lack of time			X-		X-							
Impact on health	X					X	X		X	X	X	
Australian diet	X											
Healthy food	X		X					X				
Medical problems				X					x	X		
Media/television		X	X						X			
Books									X			
Environment	X					X	X		x	X		
Dislike normal food production practices			X			X	X		x	X		
Branding						X-		X		X		
Certification												
Good emotions							X	X				
Bad emotions							X					
Education				X						X		
Religion				X								
Attraction												

However this scant reference about the impact of price on buying decisions toward organic food in relation to culture is *not supported* in this research (section 4.9).

In turn, this research *extends* the literature by identifying that social and family influence and the changing Australian diet toward healthier food were positive influential cultural elements when considering buying decisions toward organic food (section 4.9). Although negative comments were recorded regarding personal income and cost of food, these issues were not considered major influencing factors in relation to the cultural factor.

Previous studies on *the Australian diet* identified Australians claim to have made dietary changes as a result of health and nutritional concerns (Bannerman 1998; Food Marketing Institute 1992; Stanton 1999). Other international studies identified a high correlation between consumption of organic food and consumers sensitivity to diet issues (Homer and Kahle 1988) however no studies linked diet with cultural factors.

In turn, *findings* of this research was *not fully consistent* with the literature as consumers considered dietary changes to be due to cultural and personal lifestyle changes over the past 20 years. Respondents also indicated cultural influence had led to a change to healthy food awareness which included nutritional factors and health concerns and led to *positive* actions (section 4.9). These health concerns included medical problems and unwanted additives and chemical residues in normal foods.

Social. There was no international studies directly relating to internalised social factors in relation to buyer decisions on organic food. Demographic variables had been studied and within these marital status and age of children were found to be influential factors (Thompson 1998). This research extends the literature by identifying the internalised social factors of influence from family, reference groups

and social contacts playing an important role in organic buying decisions (section 4.9).

Personal. International surveys on personal factors such as age, income, education were examined in the literature (section 2.5). Studies on *age* indicated consumers were concerned about health and safety of food (Booth 1992; Mintel 1995). Other studies found that the consumer segment with the highest propensity to purchase organic food contained a higher than average proportion of people forty years and over (The Hartman Group 1996). Both of these studies were *supported* in this research however the findings *extended* research by establishing that lower age participants were not as interested in purchasing organic food and were more interested in earning money and social position (section 4.10).

International studies also linked 'doing something for the environment' to age, income and lifestyle (Hutchins and Greenhalgh 1997, p. 276). Other international studies suggested that higher *income* households were more likely to purchase organic products (Food Marketing Institute 1997; Parkwood Research Associates 1994) and income was positively related to environmental sensitivity (section 2.7). In this research respondents related perceptions of 'doing good' to their environmental beliefs (section 4.7) not their age (section 4.10) and this was *not consistent* with the findings in the literature. However income did negatively relate to culture (section 4.10) and positively to certain personal situations with some respondents indicating they had more available income to purchase organic food now their family had grown up and left home (section 4.10). This finding was *not consistent* with the literature as it referred to less income

commitments leading to influence on buying decisions for organic food, rather than a higher income.

The literature stated environmentally conscious consumers are adverse to making trade-offs in their lifestyles (section 2.7). However, there have been no direct

International studies on lifestyle in relation to buying decisions for organic food.

In turn, this research makes a *contribution* by establishing lifestyle factors relating to faster lifestyle, lack of time, concern for healthy food in relation to medical factors, changes in diet in Australia, and environmental problems as major issues when determining the importance of lifestyle in the buying decision process for organic food (section 4.10). Lifestyle factors of faster lifestyle and lack of time to grow organic food led to *positive* changes toward purchasing organic products. Lack of time to search for the product, which included convenience and availability of product, were other lifestyle factors that proved *negative* toward purchasing decisions for organic food.

Psychological factors influencing consumer decisions in Australia for organic food

The first part of this research question the internalised factors influencing consumer decisions for purchasing organic food in Australia has been discussed above (section 5.2.2). Next, the second section of research issue 2 which was concerned with determining the psychological factors which influence the consumer decision process for organic food in Australia is examined. Findings from the research in relation to each of the psychological factors will be now contrasted with those from the literature.

Motivation. Consumer surveys in Germany and the United Kingdom indicated the primary reason for motivation toward purchasing organic food is *concern about health and safety* in food (section 2.7). This concern was reported to lead to beliefs and attitudes. Other international studies referred to product attributes as demand factors

(section 2.7) but did not specifically indicate if these were motivating factors. Australian studies into to food safety indicated this issue was not reflected in demand for organic products (section 2.2).

In turn, findings from this research *supported* concern about health and safety in food as a major motivating factor for most of the respondents (section 4.6). Furthermore, this research *identified* that low level consumers were also concerned with taste, and high level consumers were also concerned with the environment. Respondents indicated the deterrent factors for motivation in buying decisions for organic products in Australia were the high price of the organic food and lack of trust in labels.

Previous research did not examine emotions in relation to motivation toward purchasing organic products. This research *extended* motivation to include emotions and found consumers were motivated by 'good feelings', 'fear', 'risk', and indicated emotions of 'anger and annoyance' with negative issues in health and safety of food, and the poor quality of normal food (section 4.6).

Perception. There were no studies that have been undertaken Internationally regarding consumers perceptions leading to buying decisions of organic products. Thus, this research makes a *contribution* by establishing that taste, quality and appearance of organic products were major issues in perception when making decisions to purchase organic products in Australia (section 4.8). Consumers perceived organic food as 'being superior' and perceived they were 'doing good' for the environment by buying organic products. Consumers did not agree on whether the food 'lasted longer'. Organic food as a 'healthy alternative' was perceived as a minor factor when making buying decisions for organic food in Australia. Product appearance, high price and failure for the product to last longer were considered deterrent factors in consumers perceptions.

Learning. International studies on learning indicated environmentally conscious consumers obtain information on environmental matters from the media primarily television (Ottman 1992). Other literature on learning indicates learning is acquired through culture and social class as well as family and friends (section 2.8).

In turn, in this research, it was the lower consumption group who indicated television and media were major issues in learning which did *not support* the literature (section 4.5). The environmentally conscious consumer's need to obtain information on the environment primarily from television, would be more likely to apply to the high consumption focus groups of organic food because of their high interest in organic food. Furthermore, the research found that family influence and reading were other major issues all groups. Family influence factors *were consistent* with the literature, however learning through books was *not supported* by the literature (section 4.5). Reference groups, and culture were considered minor issues of learning. Learning was considered a major influencing factor when deciding to purchase organic products.

Beliefs and attitude. International studies into product attributes such as quality, freshness, taste, nutritional value, physical appearance and price lead to beliefs and attitudes which persuade or dissuade the consumer to make a purchase choice regarding organic products (Ekelund and Froman 1991; Sparks and Shepherd 1992; Thimm, Karst and Schart 1992).

In turn, in this research concern over environment damage and damage to health were strongly emphasised in all groups as belief issues (section 4.7). This was *not consistent* with the literature and indicated Australian consumers were concerned with damage specifically related to the Australian environment and consequent damages to health. Moreover, with consumers in the low consumption groups showing extreme concerns in these issues there is indication environmental and health beliefs and attitudes do not necessarily lead to purchasing decisions for organic products. Furthermore, factors of influence included taste, quality, marketing techniques of normal foods, and value for money, and rebellious attitudes to International food standards. Deterrent factors recorded included lack of knowledge of organic food and the fact that the certification

bodies were not united. Beliefs and attitudes were considered major factors when purchasing organic products in Australia.

Personality. There was no literature to support personality as a factor that influences the organic buying decisions of Australian consumers. In this research, personality was found to be of no importance and was only discussed by one respondent in relation to cooking techniques and flavour (section 4.9). This respondent indicated her personality led her to purchasing organic food so she could cook with different flavours. The respondent implied organic food had a better flavour.

In brief, this research has made a contribution by determining that culture, social, and personal factors are important when making buying decisions regarding organic products in Australia. Motivation, emotions, learning, perception, beliefs and attitudes are also important factors. Personality was not considered a major factor and indicated no relevance to buying decisions. Issues that are important to consumers within these factors may change with the level of environmental consciousness as was evident in learning and motivational factors.

Research issue 3: What is the purchase decision structure consumers use when purchasing organic products in Australia.

The conclusion of RI 2 revealed the factors important to buying decisions regarding organic food in Australia. In turn, this third research issue was concerned with the buying decision process.

RI 3 *What is the purchase decision structure consumers use when purchasing organic products in Australia.*

There has been no research about the buying decision process of the Australian consumer of organic products and RI 3 aims at uncovering the factors in the buying decision process through analising the structure consumers identified.

Problem recognition. The first contextual step of the buying decision process considered in this research was that of problem recognition. Literature relevant to this

topic area contends that consumers can make nominal or habitual decisions, limited decisions, or extended decisions (section 2.10). In turn, in this research all

respondents at some stage had recognised the need for organic products when going shopping. *Habitual shopping behaviour* was identified by some respondents in high and low consumption groups and this involved no decision. Respondents in mostly the high consumption groups indicated they regularly went to the organic shop for the purpose of buying organic food. Many others indicated *limited or low level involvement* with some respondents aware of product class but not familiar with brand and features. High involvement behaviour was evident in both the high and low consumption group (section 4.11). Most of the high consumption group indicated a high involvement buyer decision process.

Situation analysis. In this research usage situation was uncovered as the main factor of importance in situation analysis (section 4.11). Most of the respondents indicated choice of shop and particular product choice because of health and diet issues were important factors. Deterrent factors included lack of time, price of products, lack of convenience in location and availability of products, and lack of handling and presentation of organic produce. Other minor factors included certification and environmental concerns.

Information search. This research revealed information search was important in the buying decision process with respondents stating the ‘effort’ and ‘time’ spent looking for organic food. Many respondents had noted certification was an attracting factor in their search while others read labels (section 4.11). Some indicated organic products that were Australian or locally grown was an important factor when searching for products. One deterrent factor indicated was failure to find organic produce.

Evaluation of alternatives. This research indicated respondents compared quality of organic products to price, price to quality, quality to home grown, price to that of

normal food, taste and feeling to that of other products (section 4.11) Others evaluated organic food by looking for signs that the food was really organic.

Purchase decision. Respondents in the low consumption group indicated their intention to purchase did not always lead to purchase decisions. This was not surprising as they were a low consumption group (section 4.11). Others in the high consumption groups indicated more evidence of definite purchase behaviour. Statements such as 'have to buy', and 'if they are available I will buy them' indicated consumers were more committed in their purchasing decisions.

In conclusion the buyer decision structure involves both habitual, low involvement, and high involvement decisions. Most respondents at some time have recognised a need for organic products, and usage situation is the main influencing issue in situation analysis

5.3 Conclusions about the research problem: How and why do consumers make purchase decisions about organic products in Australia?

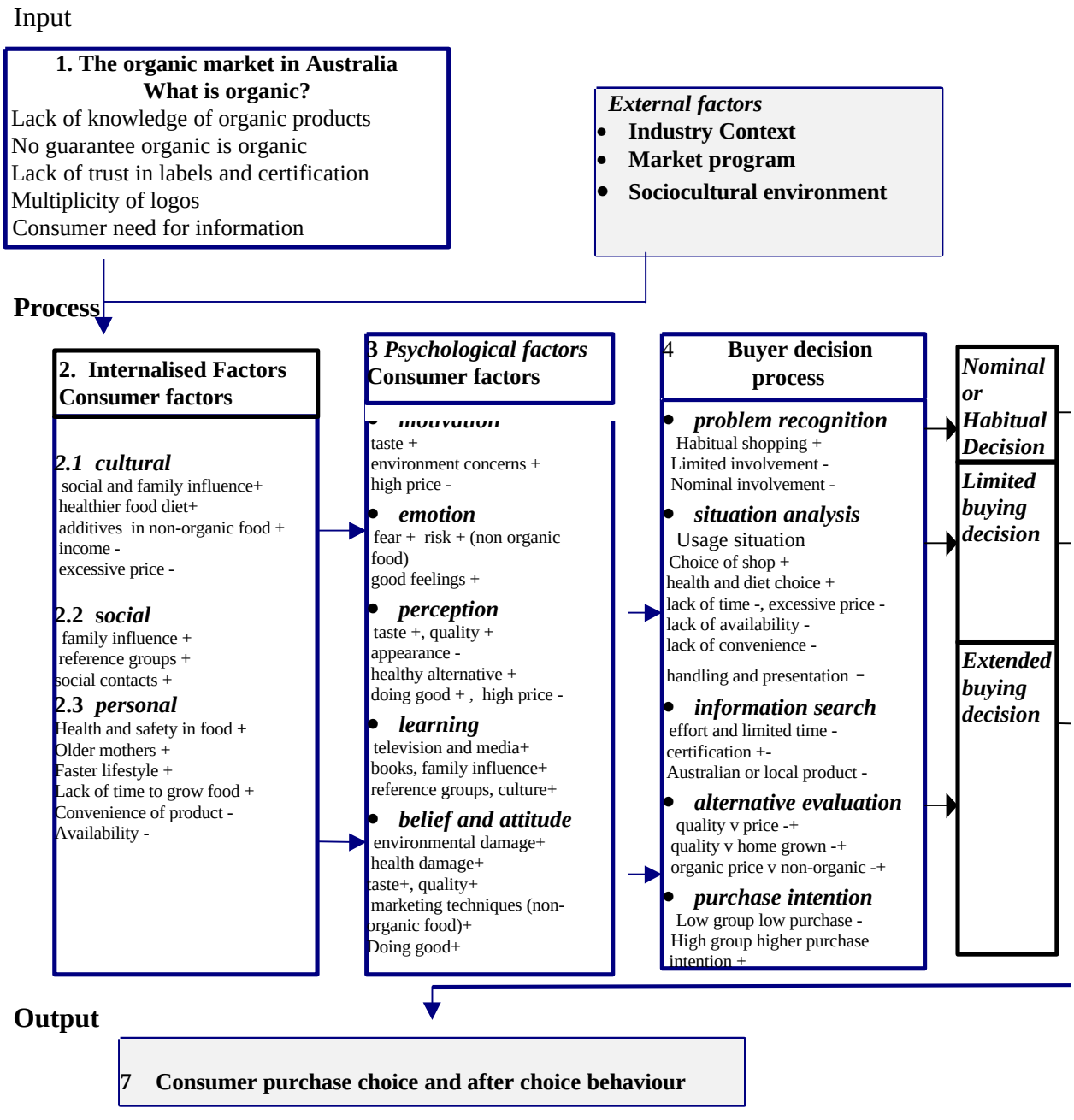
This research is the first empirical study which aimed to uncover opportunities for organic products in Australia by examining the factors influencing consumer behaviour using Australian focus groups. From the discussion above of the three research issues it is now possible to address the research problem of this report: *RP 1 How and why do consumers make purchase decisions about organic products in Australia?* The focus groups provided a source of rich information and answered the research issues in previous sections. Therefore this section gives a summary of conclusions of the research issues.

Based on these conclusions of the research issues above, figure 5.2 builds a general framework that helps identify how and why consumers make purchase decisions for organic products in Australia. Factors leading to consumer confusion were investigated and the major influential issues identified in this research. These included lack of knowledge and trust, a need for information, multiplicity of logos, and no

guarantee organic is organic. Then the internalised and psychographic factors influencing consumers in their buying decisions were examined and culture, social

and personalised factors were found to have a strong influence. Of the psychographic factors examined motivation, beliefs and attitude, and perception were considered important while emotion and learning were weaker factors of influence. Personality was not considered to be relevant to organic buying decisions.

Figure 5.2 Final model of this research



Source: Adapted from Schiffman et al. (1997) based on figure 2.2
Note: + =Positive influence on buying - = Negative influence on buying

Factors of influence in the buying decision process were the situation analysis, information search and evaluation of alternatives. Most consumers recognised they had a need for organic food and with some this led to a nominal information search , limited information search, or habitual buying practice. The extended problem solving revealed strong forces of influence coming from usage situation, search for information and evaluation of alternatives. This research revealed that income, excessive price of organic food, availability, convenience, and lack of time were major deterrent factors in the buying decision process.

5.4 Contributions of the research

In summary, only a few International studies relate to how and why consumers purchase organic products. There have been no studies relating to purchasing behaviour of Australian consumers towards organic products. Therefore the major contribution of this research is to add to the existing literature in this area. These contributions cover:

- what variables should be considered,
- what trade offs need to be made, and
- how the purchase decision is made.

In particular this report makes several contributions for it contains:

- the first consumer behaviour research in Australia on organic food purchasing decisions.
- the first exploration of how and why consumers purchase organic food products in Australia
- arguably the first consumer research into confusion in the organic industry in Australia
- arguably presenting a first comprehensive model of factors influencing the purchasing decisions for organic food Australian consumers

- arguably the first investigation of the buying decision process structure for organic products in Australia.

5.5 Implications to theory, management practice and policy

5.5.1 Implications for theory

The findings from this research are in contrast to the consumer behaviour literature. This literature suggests that the internal factors influencing consumer behaviour are motivation, perception, learning, beliefs, attitudes and personality. Factors such as culture, social and personal are external influences to the consumer. This model is legitimate for consumer behaviour approaches where the country of consumers location is not specified.

In this research, the internalised cultural, social and personal factors were considered along with the internal psychological factors influencing consumer behaviour (section 4.9). These internalised factors provided a wider scope for examination of the individual consumer as it particularly related to internal factors influencing the individual Australian consumer. Thus the model was adapted to include the internalised factors influencing the consumer. A modified model for organic consumer buying behaviour was shown in figure 5.2.

5.5.2 Implications for management practice

From findings in this research a revised model of consumer behaviour for organic food in Australia has been developed to incorporate the extent of decisions for buying behaviour and the important factors influencing consumer buying decisions for organic food products in Australia. Strategic and tactical implications for management of organic industries could be drawn from this model by examining which factors leading to consumer confusion, which factors are more important in influencing consumers in their purchase decisions and the buying decision process. Furthermore, this research suggests areas for further development to improve the organic market in Australia. In order to increase market demand, management should consider the following:

- changes to the excessive price of organic food

- more consumer information
- more local organic produce
- fresher produce
- more available organic food in supermarkets
- nicer presentation in shops
- better handling and quality control

Other *marketing* strategies that could be suggested include:

- formation of cooperatives to market organic produce
- household deliveries
- Internet marketing and ordering over the Internet.
- formation of buying groups
- Sunday and Saturday organic markets

This research identified price, product availability, convenience, location of shops, and handling and presentation of products as major deterring factors in the industry.

Older consumers could be a possible target segment because of their concern for health and safety in food as their age increased (section 4.10).

5.5.3 Implications for policy

The findings of this research will assist policy makers understand how and why consumers make purchase decisions about organic food in Australia. The findings in section 4 will help government departments understand: areas of consumer confusion, processes of change that are needed for success of the organic industry in the future, which internal factors influence the consumer in their buying decisions, and the buying decision process for organic consumers in Australia.

Suggestions for change of policy include: standardisation of the organic food industry with one standard certification policy and one standardised organic food label, education, review of chemical and pesticide levels, review of import policy and review

of government assistance in converting farms to organic. Standardisation of organic certification procedures and labels would allow the consumer to recognise

and trust the product they were intending to purchase was indeed organic. Consumers would be less confused as to which product label was organic (section 2.5) and would be assured the level of certification was verified. In turn, education policy should extend to informing farmers, schools and consumers about organic food and where necessary organic food production. Such education would assist in expanding the industry through the wider knowledge base. Moreover, the education could extend to farmers regarding the use and abuse of chemical sprays to ensure organic farms when established and local rivers, are not polluted by surrounding properties. A reduction in chemical pesticide and herbicide levels of use, could encourage a move toward organic food production.

Next, government assistance in converting non-organic farms to organic would enable the organic market to strengthen and meet demand for product in the future. The rapidly growing organic market in Australia and internationally (section 2.3) indicates that the organic food industry is moving into new spheres of success and should be supported at these initial stages. Moreover, this success will not be encouraged if organic food is continued to be imported into Australia to meet demands for the product. The government should review import policy to allow Australian growers to establish their markets of fresh local produce.

5.6 Limitations to research

Two potential limitations for this study could be in the data collection. Firstly, this report is an analytic generalisation and a survey is needed for statistical generalisation of the findings. Secondly, the higher consumption focus groups were chosen from member of the organic growing association in Toowoomba (section 4.2). It would have been difficult to find high level consumers of organic food who did not have an interest in growing organic products. Furthermore, of the respondents who attended the high level consumption groups only one was a very small commercial grower. Others showed an interest in growing organic products to supplement their budget, while many expressed an interest in healthier food consumption regardless of where it

came from. This choice of respondents did not have severe limitations on the research as most high organic consumers attempt to grow organic products because of their high interest in organic food.

5.7 Implications for future research

This research has identified a number of areas requiring future research. Another study using survey methods could confirm the findings of this study especially in the areas of RI2 and RI3 as the study has been exploratory in nature. Such a study could include more specific segmentation bases such as different age groups, or consumers with different income levels and could be undertaken in greater detail.

This research concentrated on the internal and internalised factors influencing the consumer in their buying decisions for organic food in Australia. Other areas such as external factors influencing consumers could be examined. This would provide a greater body of information on which to base marketing strategies, marketing decisions, and Government policy.

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Appendix A

The moderators guide.

(Q1) What do you classify as organic food and how do you tell it is organic?

(Q2) Have you or any member of you family, ever purchased organic food? If so, how often? What type of product?

(Q3) How and what did you learn about organic products and what attracted you to them?

(Q4) What motivates you to purchase organic products and how does this affect your emotions?

(Q5) How do your beliefs or attitude influence your choice for organic products? Any environmental beliefs? Strong feelings for the product

(Q6) How do you perceive the products when making a decision to purchase and what expectations or performance do you expect to gain from the purchase?

(Q7) What other factors influence your decision to purchase organic products? Your culture? Your family or social contacts?

(Q8) Does your lifestyle, age or situation influence your decision to purchase organic products?

(Q9) What process do you go through when deciding and purchasing the product? What do you look for? How do you come to a decision?

(Q10) What would you like to change in the organic market that would improve your purchasing of products?