



# The effect of moral and subjective norms, perceived behavioural control and habitual restrained attitudes on intentions to buy local food.

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## Background

Climate change affects many areas of life, including the ability to accurately produce food. As a response, policy makers are increasingly emphasizing the need to develop more sustainable forms of agriculture. Nonetheless, most consumers buy food in conventional food systems. Local food initiatives state that the "share of local food is barely growing".

## Objective

To clarify the lagging growth of local food consumption, this study aims to further the understanding of consumer behaviour in local food systems (LFS). This is done by applying the theory of planned behaviour (TPB). The TPB offers a framework to investigate one's intention to engage in a certain behaviour. To enhance validity and sketch a more holistic picture, this study extended the TPB with moral norms and habitual behaviour.

## Introduction

The TPB has previously been applied to sustainable food consumption like organic and fair trade food consumption. However, less effort has been devoted towards buying local food. Especially scant effort has been devoted towards investigating the barriers in buying local food. These include inconvenience of location and higher searching costs.

To fully capture behaviour in LFS, this study investigates both barriers and drivers based on the TPB, moral norms and habitual behaviour. The TPB states that subjective norms, perceived behavioural control (PBC) and attitudes predict one's intention.

## Hypotheses

**Subjective norm** is the perceived social pressure a person perceives to engage in a certain behaviour.

**H1: a positive subjective norm towards buying local food, enhances one's intention to buy local food**

**PBC** is one's perceived ability to engage in a certain behaviour, based on the presence of factors that facilitate or impede this behaviour.

**H2: greater PBC enhances one's intention to buy local food**

**Moral norms** refer to an individual's beliefs about the correctness and incorrectness of a certain behaviour

**H3: positive moral norms towards buying local food enhance one's intention to buy local food**

**Attitudes** constitute the subjectively weighted evaluations of the perceived outcomes or attributes of engaging in a certain behaviour.

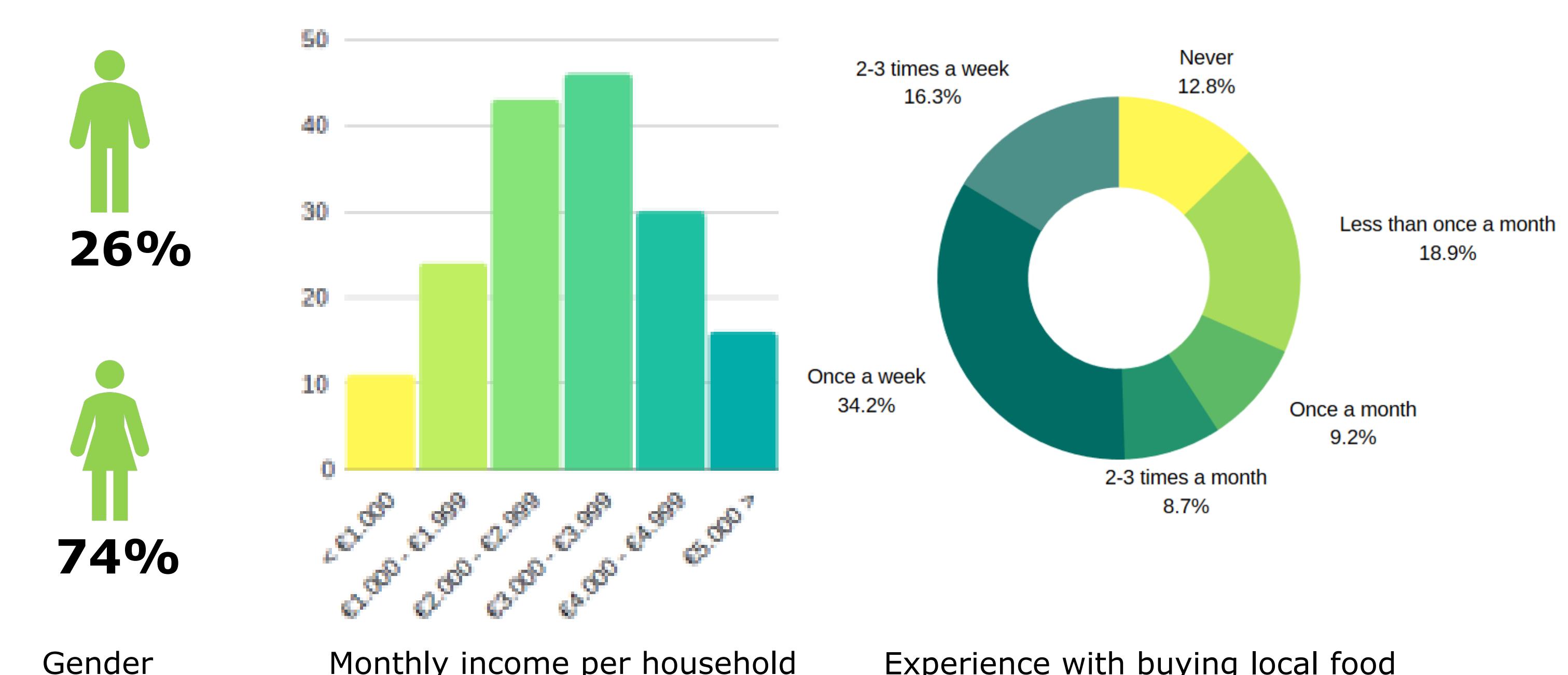
**H4: positive attitudes towards local products will increase one's intention to buy local food**

**Habitual behaviour** reduces reassessment of alternatives.

**H5: the relationship between attitudes and one's intention to buy local food will be weakened when strong habitual behaviour exists in buying regular food.**

## Methodology

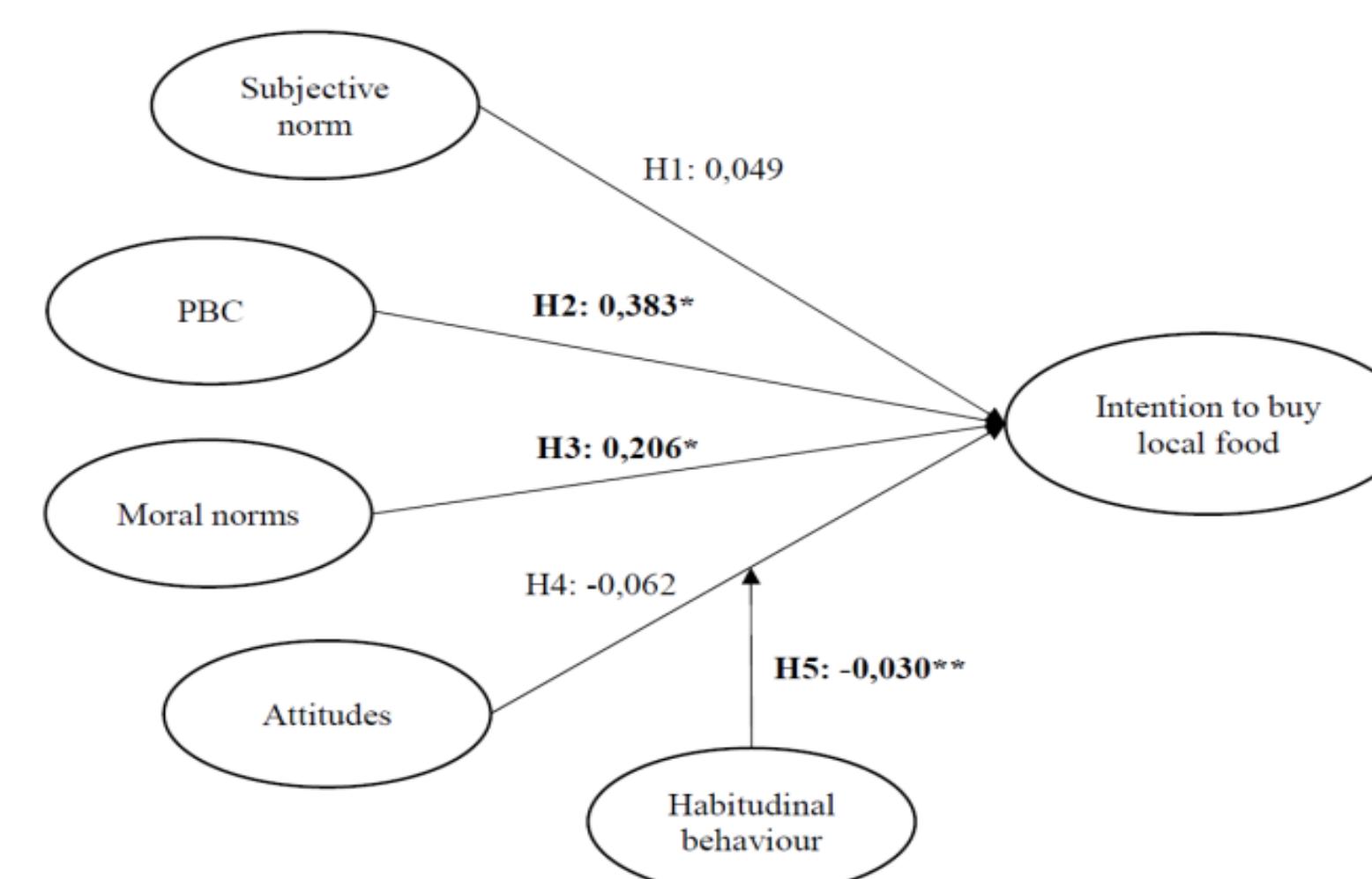
Data was collected through online, self-administered questionnaires, with one open question and questions related to the latent items. Participants were residents of Friesland who were recruited through social media platforms and Frisian organisations. In total 216 respondents filled out the questionnaire in April and May 2020.



## Results

Hypotheses 2, 3 and 5 were supported. Given the interesting finding that attitudes did not influence the intention to buy local food, this study distinguished between desired and planned intention. **Desired intention** is an intention where one hopes to buy local food, but has not explicitly planned to do so. **Planned intention** is an explicit commitment to intend to buy local food.

By distinguishing between planned and desired intention, an attitude-intention gap was found for people with positive attitudes and high desired intention. The grounds for gap were investigated based on the open question and indicated that **location, motivation, information and price** cause the presence of this gap.



Structural diagram of the hypothesized model. Hypotheses in bold were supported. \*  $p < 0,1$ , \*\* $p < 0,05$ , \*\*\* $p < 0,01$ .  $n = 184$

## Conclusions

- Low influence of **subjective norm** can be due to autonomous context and cultural influence. Policy makers and sustainable entrepreneurs should be aware of relations between consumers;
- Moral norm** is a significant predictor. Sustainable entrepreneurs should highlight this in their communication;
- Novel conceptualisation of **intention**. Positive attitudes no guarantee for buying local food, ensure infrastructure and information for consumers with **high desired intention**;
- Habitual behaviour** reduces rational evaluation. Promotion should move beyond promoting local food and target habits too.

# Tables

**Table 1** Descriptive statistics and correlations

	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5
1 Intention	3,26	1,03					
2 Subjective norm	2,73	0,77	0,318**				
3 PBC	4,75	2,15	0,633**	0,304**			
4 Moral norms	2,43	0,93	0,533**	0,404**	0,370**		
5 Attitudes	4,22	0,69	-0,466**	-0,284**	-0,335**	-0,534**	
6 Habits	2,73	0,80	-0,284**	0,030	-0,174**	-0,144*	0,149*

n = 184 for all variables, \*p < 0,1, \*\*p < 0,05, (1-tailed test)

**Table 2** Summary of structural equation modelling results.

	Intention (overall)	Desired intention	Planned intention
Subjective norm	0,049 (0,066)	-0,042 (0,063)	0,146 (0,097)
PBC	0,383* (0,052)	0,173* (0,050)	0,597* (0,076)
Moral norms	0,206* (0,062)	0,315*** (0,060)	0,151*** (0,096)
Attitudes	-0,062 (0,095)	-0,179** (0,091)	0,013 (0,139)
Habits x attitudes	-0,030** (0,014)	-0,029** (0,013)	-0,037*** (0,020)

Standard errors are reported below regression coefficients in parentheses.

\* p < 0,1, \*\*p < 0,05, \*\*\*p < 0,01, n = 184

**Table 3** Investigation of the attitude-intention gap between positive attitudes and desired intention to buy local food

<b>Location</b>	[1] "I would like to buy more local food in the city, however I think there is not enough supply in the stores here. I buy my daily groceries in the supermarket but there is not local food offered here. I am however a great supporter for buying local.". [2] "It is unclear to me where I can buy local food here" [3] "I like to buy local food, however the location where to buy it is unknown to me"
<b>Motivation</b>	[1] "I am just too lazy, I pass by a local vegetable store everyday however the ease of buying everything in one store always attracts me". [2] "I have bought potatoes at a local farmer once, however I find it time consuming to drive to the farmer". [3] "I can buy everything at once at the AH, which is easier. Although the Streekboer gives more satisfaction, I still prefer the AH as they have pre-washed spinach and kale". [4] "The reason why I have not bought local food yet is, I think, laziness. The intention to buy local food is present. But I just have not yet taken action to find out more about local food and where to buy it"
<b>Information</b>	[1] "There is no clear webpage [on local food]" [2] "We have just moved here, however it is hard to find out where to buy local food" [3] "I buy my food in the supermarket, I would like to know where local food is sold"
<b>Price</b>	[1] "I have bought food at the Streekboer for a while, however it got too expensive in my opinion" [2] "I like to buy local food to support local farmers, however it is often times very expensive" [3] "...it is often more expensive and I have to watch my expenditures"

Quotes were translated from Dutch to English.