

ABSTRACT

The sustainable food movement highlights the many credence attributes associated with locally grown produce, aligning with both the public and private benefits.

Motivators for food purchases in past studies:

- Price, quality, convenience, brand familiarity

Here an expanded Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) model¹ led us to explore other motivators:

- Consumer confidence
- Perceived consumer effectiveness (e.g. self efficacy)
- Social norms

Three studies are discussed, all with different methods and samples.

- Introductory Psychology students at Colorado State University ($n=218$)
 - Comprehensive paper survey
 - Consumer confidence; attitudes; social norms; and perceived consumer effectiveness (PCE) and product availability
 - Both forms of perceived behavioral control played a significant role in understanding consumer purchase motivations.
- Nationwide internet survey ($n=1269$)
 - TPB model—including attitudes, social norms, and PCE
 - Predicted who would be purchasers of produce from direct sources (grower, farmers market).
- Store tracked local tomato purchases by an in-store sample ($n=72$) of consumers/respondents
 - 92% purchased local and consumer confidence and social norms were correlated with purchases.

All of the factors in the expanded TPB model were significant predictors of a behavioral outcome regarding local produce in at least one study.

Taking these factors into account should improve the effectiveness of marketing campaigns designed to increase support of the local food system.

Acknowledgements

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Recent Food Trends

- Consumers are eating locally, seasonally, and watching their "foodmiles."²
- From 1994 to 2009, the number of U.S. farmers markets increased 300% to 5,274.³
- Only positive attitudes exist toward local foods among consumers, indicating support for the local economy and environment.⁴



Objectives

- To understand the possible motivation behind local food purchases to help bridge the attitude-behavior gap.
- To examine individual and situational determinants that might affect attitudes, behavior intention and behaviors regarding local foods, primarily focusing on the predictors of the TPB model.

Methods

University Student Survey. The survey was administered in January 2009 to 218 (69 M, 144 F) Introductory Psychology students at Colorado State University.

On-line Survey. The survey was distributed in fall 2008 to a nationally representative sample ($n=1,269$) of primary grocery shoppers who purchased fresh produce. Sample was 71% female.

Retail Survey. Shoppers ($n=72$) were recruited from a grocery store in Minneapolis, MN in 2008. 11 males and 41 females participated in the survey and a behavioral component of study. All four attributes (local/organic) were manipulated in price intervention followed by a consumer survey.

References

- ¹Fishbein & Ajzen (1975). *Belief, attitude, intention and behavior: An introduction to theory and research*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.
²Thilmany, D., Bond, C., Keeling-Bond, J., Stushnoff, S., Stonaker, F., Bunning, M., and Kendall, P. 2007. Eat Your Fruits and Veggies: Exploring Fresh-Produce Market Choices. *Journal of Food Distribution Research* 38 (1).
³USDA Agricultural Marketing Service, 2009 <http://www.ams.usda.gov/farmersmarkets/FarmersMarketGrowth.htm>.
⁴Zepeda, & Levinton-Reid (2004). Consumers' views on local food. *Journal of Food Distribution Research*, 35 (3).

Results

University Survey

- The expanded TPB model was a useful model to explain local food buying intentions. Specifically, consumer confidence added variance explained in all TPB models with different dimensional motivators.
- Motivational dimensions (social, environmental, health, economic) and environmental concern level affected which TPB factors were better determinants of behavioral intention.

On-line Survey

- The TPB model was significant in understanding predictors that might influence auxiliary shopping behaviors (consumer engagement) and WTP for local apples.

Grocery Research

- The leveling of availability and price resulted in high local purchasing.
- Both consumer confidence and social norms in the TPB model were significant predictors of behavioral intentions. Behavioral intentions significantly predicted actual buying behavior.

Key Finding:

- Various factors motivate consumers to "Buy Local," but it seems that other psychological variables play an important role in bridging the attitude-behavior gap pertaining to fresh produce purchasing decisions.

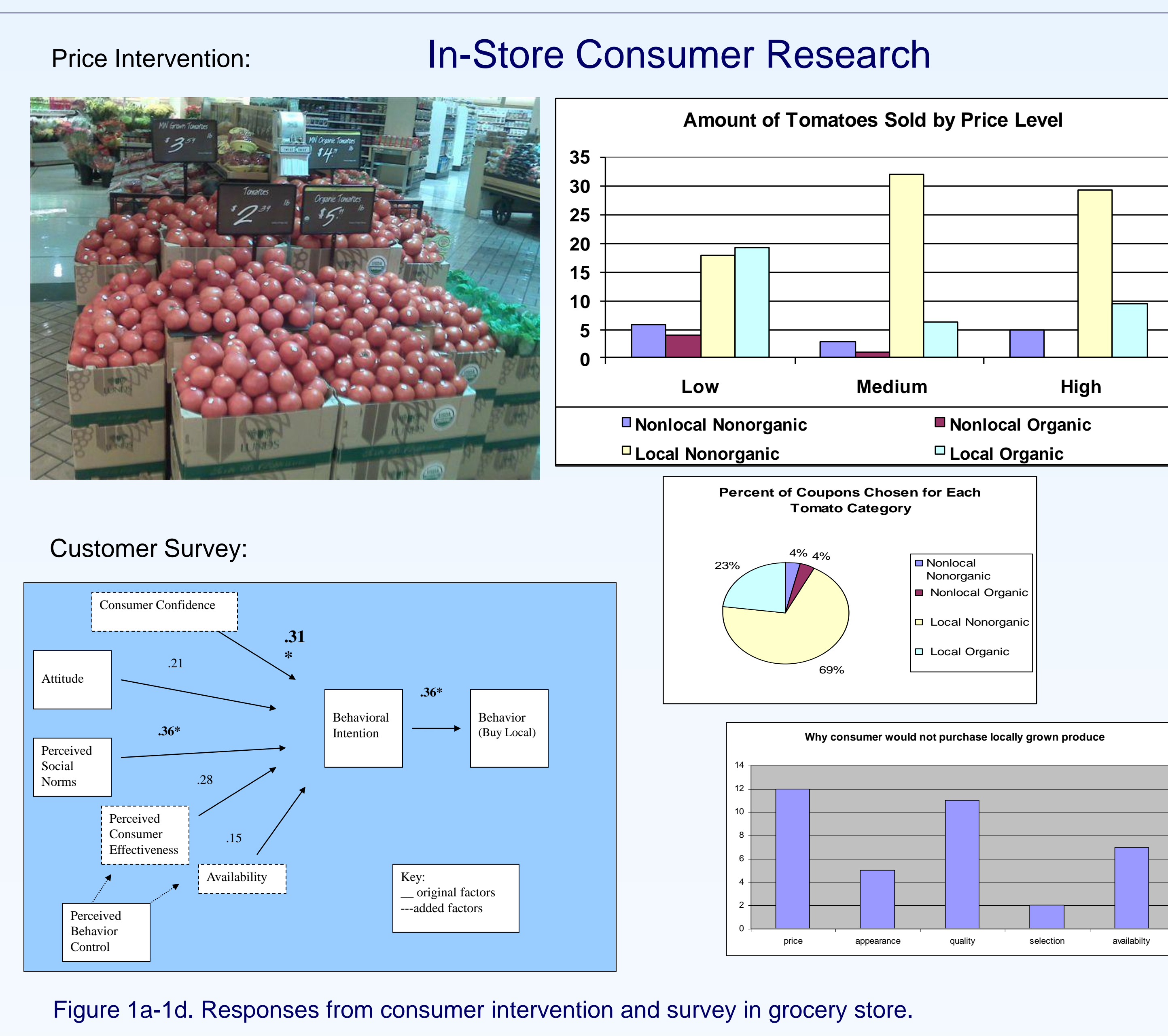


Figure 1a-1d. Responses from consumer intervention and survey in grocery store.

University Student Sample

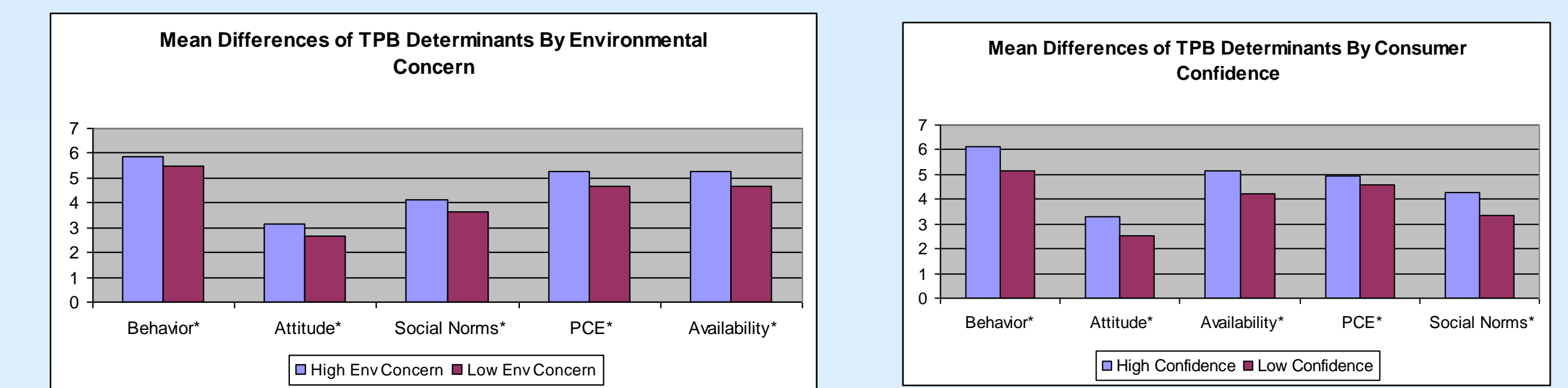


Figure 2a & 2b. Mean scores of TPB factors by other Individual Differences

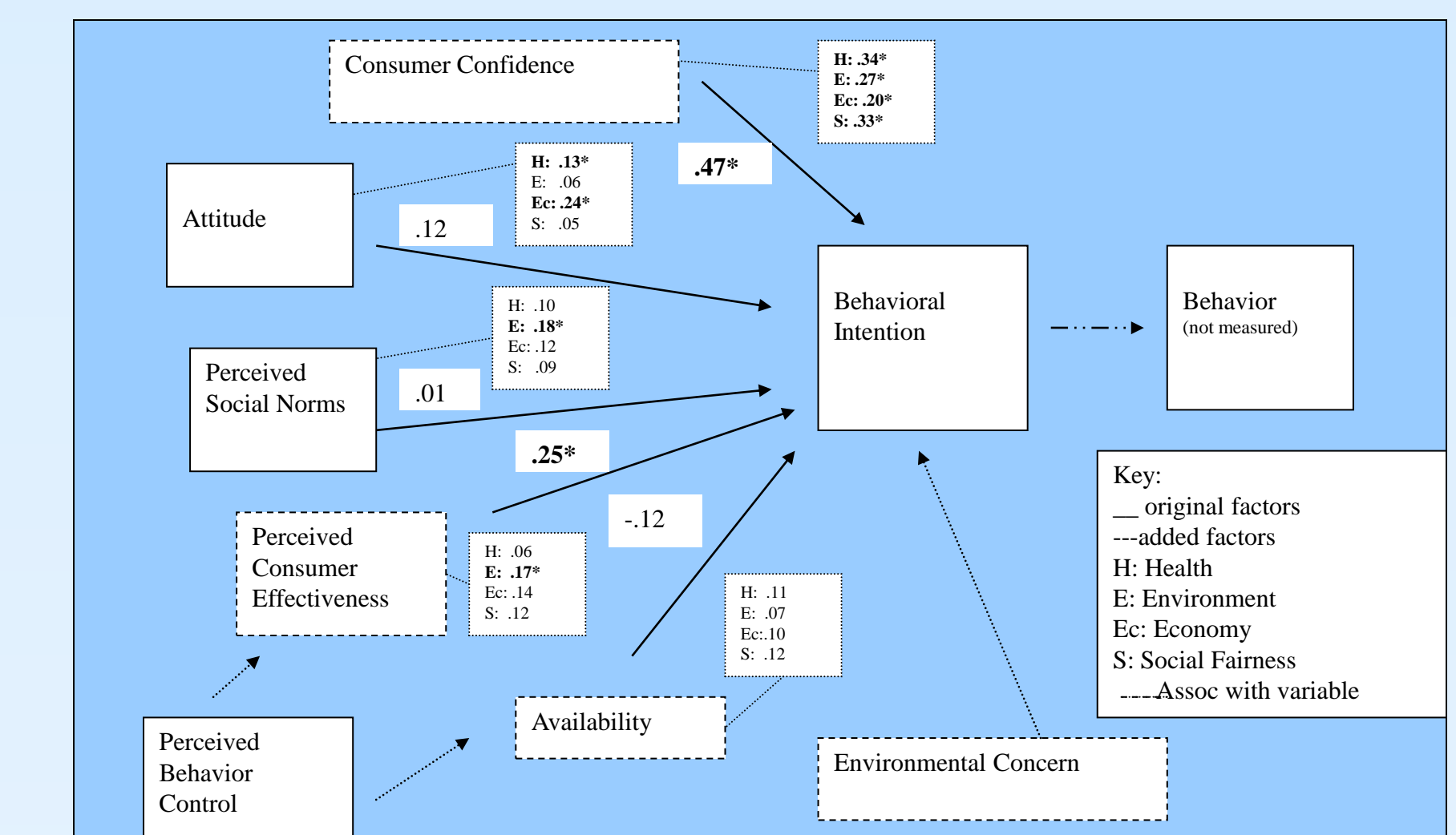
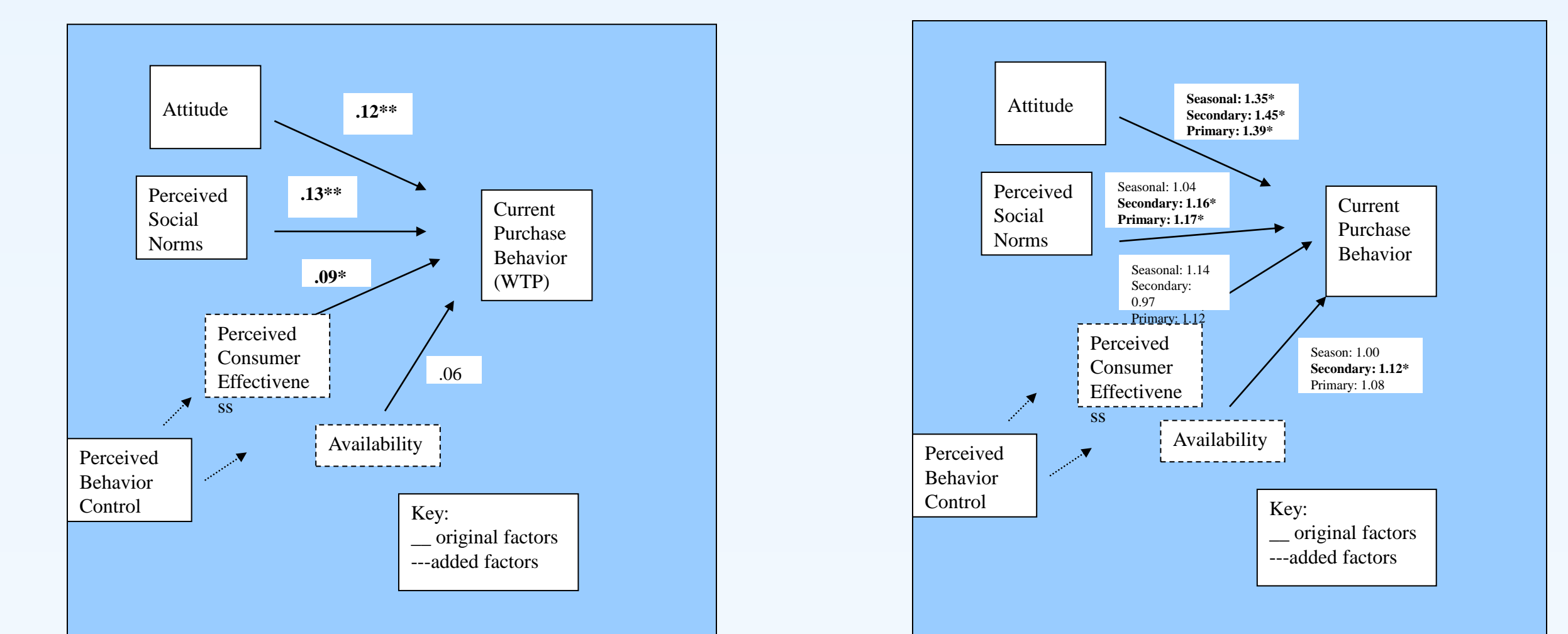
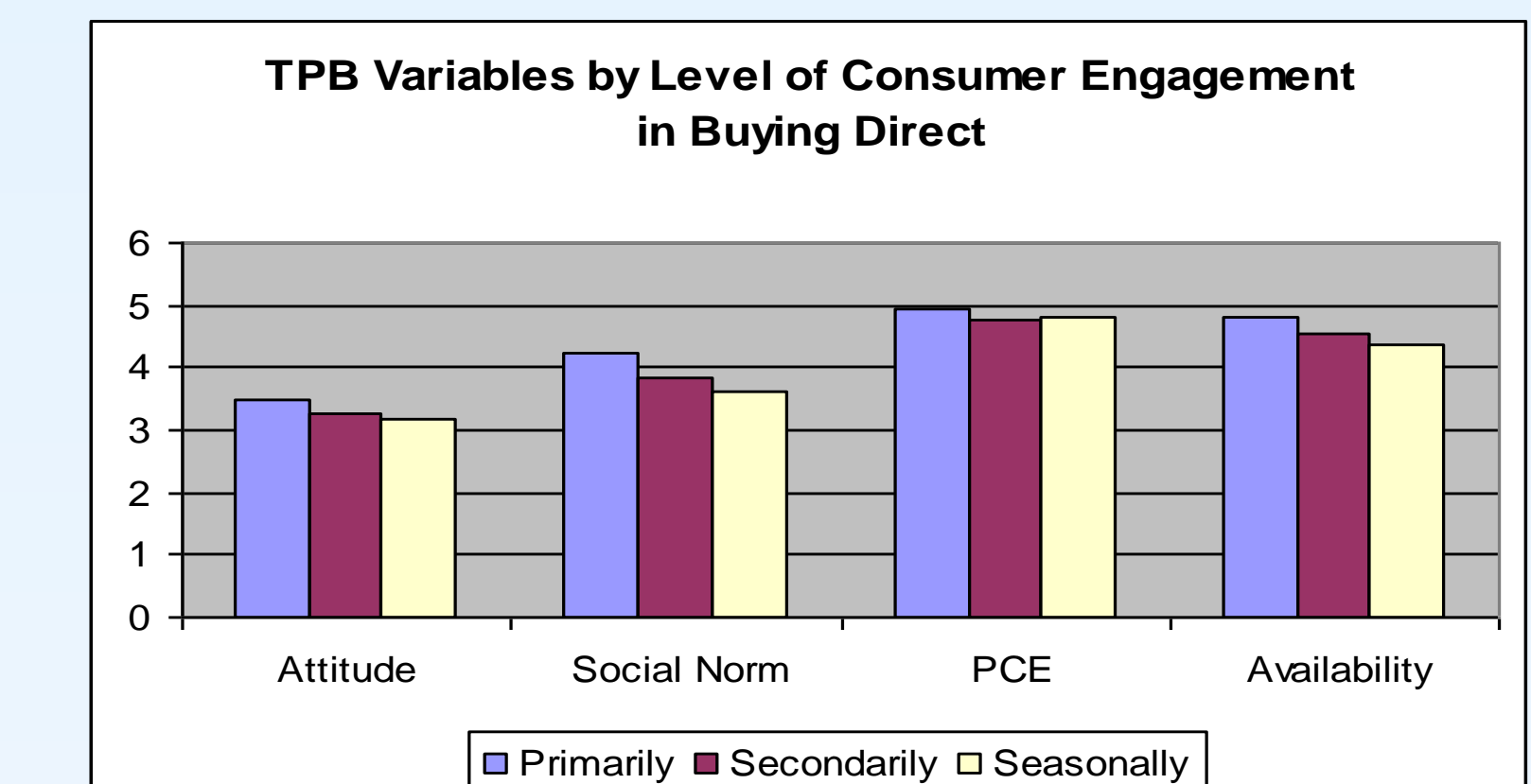


Figure 2c. Full TPB Model with All Dimensions of Local Food Included

National Web-based Survey



Figures 3a-3b. TPB Model for WTP Local Apples and Consumer Engagement

Conclusions

Positive consumer attitudes or price seem to not be the only predictors of local food purchase behavior. In fact, determinants such as consumer confidence and perceived consumer effectiveness (PCE) play a much stronger role. Since this is the case, it is important to keep in mind that psychological factors do influence motivations of food purchases. Both consumer confidence and PCE can be strengthened through marketing techniques that clarify and provide assurances to the consumer about the authenticity of the local label and its public and private benefits.