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Consumers Attitude Towards Organic Food

Mohamed Bilal Basha^a, Cordelia Mason^b, Mohd Farid Shamsudin^{c*}, Hafezali Iqbal Hussain^c, Milad Abdelnabi Salem^c

^aSharjah Women's College, 7947, Sharjah UAE

^bUnirazak Graduate School of Business, 50480 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

^cUniversiti Kuala Lumpur, UNIKL Business School, 50250 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Abstract

The awareness on the harmful effects of chemicals present in food is increasing among the consumers. The trend towards purchasing organic food is growing among people. A study to identify what actually induces consumers to turn towards organic food is important. Some of the prominent motivating factors to purchase organic foods include environmental concern, health concern and lifestyle, product quality and subjective norms. This empirical study is aimed at identifying the purchase intention of consumers towards organic foods. The study predicts the purchase intention of consumers based on the influences of factors like environmental concern, health concern and lifestyle, product quality and subjective norms on the attitude towards organic foods. The results of the study show that quality of products, environmental concern, health concern and lifestyle are the most commonly stated motives for purchasing organic foods.

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Keywords: Organic food; Purchase intention; Consumer Attitude; Consumer Perception;

1. Introduction

The rapid growth in the industrial development together with the population explosion is increasing the pressure on the agricultural production methods to improve the yield of the crops. Many studies have raised concerns about the

* Corresponding author. Tel.: +60326875400; fax: +60326875445.
E-mail address: mfarid@unikl.edu.my

increasing levels of usage of chemical fertilizers to increase the yield of food production.

The awareness on the harmful effects of these highly pollutant contaminant food products are growing among the consumers. As an alternative to these, more people are turning towards organic food products. Organic food comprises of those agricultural food products that are not treated with chemical fertilizers, pesticides, herbicides and other synthetic chemical substances during its production, processing and storage. In addition, organic food products are not containing genetically modified materials, with the purpose of reaching sustainable system of agriculture. In livestock breeding, organic method does not use growth hormones, antibiotics and other chemicals to enhance the growth. The growth and consumption of organic food products have been phenomenally increasing in the recent years due to the increasing of awareness.

2. Research objectives

The major objective of the study is to determine what motivates the consumers to turn towards organic food products. The broad research objectives of the study are listed below:

- To identify the motivating factors that influences the purchase of organic food.
- To evaluate the subjective norms of the organic food consumers.
- To study the relationship between environmental concern and attitude towards organic food products.
- To appraise the organic food consumers' attitude towards safety/trust for organic food products.

3. Conceptual Framework of the study:

Intention to purchase a product can be considered as the best predictor of actual behaviour (Ajzen, 1991). Attitude towards the behaviour influences consumer's intention to purchase the product. The belief about the behaviour and all the consequences of the behaviour has affected the perceived attitude towards the product. Attitude determines final decisions in the consumers buying behaviour. Hence, based on the importance of attitude in consumer buying decisions, a conceptual framework is evolved. The proposed framework believes that the consumer attitude towards purchasing organic food products are strongly influenced by three variables namely Environmental Concern, Health concern and lifestyle, Product quality and Subjective norms. The proposed model for purchase intentions of organic food products is shown in Figure 1.

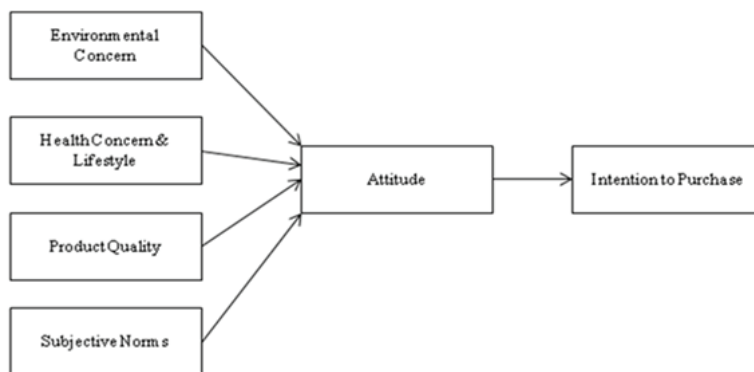


Fig 1: Conceptual Model of the study

4. Research Methodology

A quantitative survey was conducted with a randomly selected sample comprising of 50 consumers of organic products from two major cities in south India namely Chennai and Bangalore. Sample respondents for this study were selected through probability sampling approach, using random sampling methods. Consumers who were visited chosen outlets during the survey time, and those who have time to fill in the survey instrument and willing to

participate in the survey, formed the sample respondents. Their attitude towards purchasing organic food products based on the three variables namely environmental concern, health concern and lifestyle consciousness, environmental factors and safety considerations were studied. As a result of extensive review of related literature, a number of items were identified that are believed to affect the consumer's attitude towards purchasing organic food products. Each variable was measured using five items. The study used five point Likert scale with options like Strongly Disagree = 1, Disagree = 2, Neutral = 3, Agree = 4, and Strongly Agree = 5.

5. Literature Review

5.1 Environmental Care

Environmental care is one of the main motivational factors towards purchasing any product including organic products. Several studies have shown that organic production causes less harm to the environment. Consumer are increasingly getting environmental conscious and willing to contribute to protect the environmental via any means. Ling (2013) evaluated consumers' purchase intention of green products with an aim to examine drivers and its moderating variable that influencing consumers' purchase intention.

5.2 Health Concern and Lifestyle

Today's life is getting very competitive and demanding. Consumer has hardly time for physical activities but highly exposed to the diseases. Consumers are very much concern about their health and their food choice to stay healthy. Health concern has influence over consumer attitude toward organic food. Consumers' attitude towards organic food and their willingness to pay premium price by people in the capital of Egypt was explored by [Mohamed et al. \(2012\)](#). Health conscious lifestyle was found to be the foremost motivating factor of organic food purchase, as well as willingness to pay. Higher price tag and doubt about the genuineness of organic certification were found to be the prime barriers of purchase behaviour of organic food consumers.

5.3 Product Quality

Product quality refers to the value for money. Generally, organic consumer is less price sensitive and more concern over quality. Ozguven (2012) analyzed the motivation factors of consumers to buy organic food products in Izmir. Most of the respondent consumers preferred organic milk, fruit and vegetables. The results indicated that quality and price were more explanatory factors. Price and quality were found to have more significant relationship than other factors.

5.4 Subjective norms

Subjective norms are one of the important factors which influence the consumer to purchase certain product. Especially, in a country where there is high social interaction. People tend to follow the reference group, leader who in turn influence the group towards the certain behavior and action. J. Thorgosen et al., (2015) examined the factors influencing organic food consumptions in China market. The paper reported on the findings of the study into consumer perception toward beef and the influence of these perceptions on consumption. The influence of attitudes and important others (subjective norms) on intention to consumer were explored. The findings revealed that both attitude and the subjective norm influenced intention to consume, but it was attitude that was found to be of greater importance.

6. Results and Discussion

The demographic characteristics of the sample of the study are presented in Table 1. The gender of the sample consists of 50 percent each of male and female consumers. Majority of the sample consists of married people (76 percent). The family type of the consumers shows that around 80 percent of the consumers come from nuclear family. Around 68% of the consumers had earning of less than twenty thousand rupees per month. Majority of the samples are educated with at least degree graduates.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of the consumers

Particulars	Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	25	50.0
	Female	25	50.0
Age(Years)	Below 25	2	4.0
	26-35	16	32.0
	36-50	15	30.0
	Above 50	17	34.0
Marital Status	Married	38	76.0
	Unmarried	7	14.0
	Widow	5	10.0
Religion	Hindu	24	48.0
	Muslim	16	32.0
	Christian	10	20.0
Educational Qualification	Undergraduate	6	12.0
	Graduate	24	48.0
	Post Graduate	8	16.0
	Professional/Technical	7	14.0
	Others	5	10.0
Monthly Income(Rs.)	<20000	34	68.0
	20000-40000	11	22.0
	>40000	5	10.0
Family Type	Nuclear	40	80.0
	Joint	10	20.0
Occupational Status	Executive/Senior Manager	8	16.0
	Middle level Manager/Supervisor	23	46.0
	Clerical/other employee categories	6	12.0
	Professional	5	10.0
	Self-employed	4	8.0
	Agriculture/Animal husbandry	4	8.0

The descriptive statistics, reliability statistics and correlation analysis of the data are presented in Table 2. The results show that product quality is highly rated variable with the mean value of 4.09. Environmental concern (M=3.85) and Health Concern & Lifestyle (M=3.74) are the other highly rated variables. Subjective Norms is the least rated variable (M=3.29).

The reliability coefficient of the scale items is presented in Table 2. The values of Cronbach's for all the variables are well above the cut off limit of 0.6. The level of correlation between the variables is calculated using Pearson's correlation coefficient and the value of the correlation coefficient, level of significance is also presented in Table 2. It can be found that significantly positive correlations exist between the constructs Health Concern & Lifestyle and Environmental Concern, Product Quality and Environmental Concern as well as Health Concern & Lifestyle. It is interesting to find that the dependent variable attitude and intention to purchase has significantly positive correlation with all the independent variables like Environment Concern, Health Concern & Lifestyle, Product Quality and Subjective Norms.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics and Pearson correlations

Variable	Mean	SD	Environment Concern	Health Concern & Lifestyle	Product Quality	Subjective Norms	Attitude	Intention to Purchase
Environmental Concern	3.85	0.42	(0.752)					
Health Concern & Lifestyle	3.74	0.41	.379**	(0.799)				
Product Quality	4.09	0.49	.483**	.433**	(0.707)			
Subjective Norms	3.29	0.56	.079	.083	.092	(0.717)		
Attitude	3.64	0.52	.565**	.326**	.255**	.300**	(0.710)	
Intention to Purchase	3.27	0.66	.409**	.253**	.181*	.404**	.562**	(0.853)

Note: Cronbach's a value for each construct is shown in parentheses

- ** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
- * . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Regression analysis to test the hypothesis

The correlation analysis shows that positive correlation prevails among the dependent variable and independent variables. Thus, regression analysis has been conducted to identify the level of relationship between the variables and to test the hypothesis proposed for the study.

Environmental concern has positively influenced on organic food purchase intention.

Table 3 Regression results for Environmental Concern on Purchase Intention

Model	Non-standardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	1.189	.238		4.987	.000
Environmental	.685	.065	.836	10.569	.000

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
.836	.699	.693	.32022

The dependent variable was purchase intention. The hypothesis was tested by using linear regression and used the histogram to describe the probability of the result. The result showed that R square value was .699 and p value was lower than .05 (significant), which meant that the hypothesis (H1) must be accepted as the R square was greater than zero. Therefore, based on regression analysis, Environmental Concern is related to purchase intention.

An understanding of one’s own health and lifestyle issues positively motivates purchase intention of organic food.

Table 4: Regression results for Health Concern on Purchase Intention

Model	Non-standardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	.367	.131		2.895	.007
Health concern and Lifestyle	.895	.035	.965	25.548	.000

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
.965	.931	.930	.15288

The dependent variable was purchase intention. The hypothesis was tested by using linear regression and p-p plot used to observe the probability of the data. The result showed that R square value was .931 and p value was lower than .05 (significant), which meant that the hypothesis (H2) must be accepted as the R square was greater than zero. Therefore, based on regression analysis, health and lifestyle issues are related to purchase intention.

Better product quality influences a positive attitude over organic food purchase intention.

Table 5: Regression results for Food Product Quality on Purchase Intention

Model	Non-standardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	1.170	.258		4.538	.000
Food Product Quality	.675	.069	.818	9.838	.000

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
.818	.668	.662	.33632

The dependent variable was purchase intention. The result showed that R square value was .668 and p value was lower than .05 (significant), which meant that the hypothesis (H3) must be accepted as the R square was greater than zero. Therefore, based on regression analysis, product quality is related to purchase intention. Subjective norms influence positive attitude towards organic food purchase intention.

The dependent variable was purchase intention. The hypothesis was tested by using linear regression and p-p plot used to observe the probability of the data. The result showed that R square value was .659 and p value was lower than .05 (significant), which meant that the hypothesis (H4) must be accepted as the R square was greater than zero. Therefore, based on regression analysis, subjective norms are related to purchase intention.

Table 6: Regression results for Subjective Norms on Purchase Intention

Model	Non-standardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	1.137	.267		4.265	.000
Subjective Norms	.683	.071	.812	9.630	.000

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
.812	.659	.652	.34113

The dependent variable was purchase intention. The hypothesis was tested by using linear regression and p-p plot used to observe the probability of the data. The result showed that R square value was .659 and p value was lower than .05 (significant), which meant that the hypothesis (H4) must be accepted as the R square was greater than zero. Therefore, based on regression analysis, subjective norms are related to purchase intention.

Independent sample t-test was conducted to identify the differences in the mean rating of the variables between the male and female consumers. The results of t--test are presented in Table 7. The findings of the results indicate that there were no major significant differences among the male and female consumers of organic foods in all variables.

Table 7. T-test to study the significance of difference in mean rating for the variables in terms of gender

Variable	Gender				t-value	p-value
	Male (N=25)		Female (N=25)			
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Environmental	3.5	0.67	3.6	0.74	0.670	0.506
Health Concern and Lifestyle	3.5	0.62	3.8	0.60	1.413	0.164
Food product quality	3.6	0.67	3.7	0.72	0.717	0.477
Subjective norms	3.6	0.66	3.7	0.71	0.847	0.401
Attitude towards organic food	3.7	0.88	3.6	0.86	0.306	0.761
Purchase intention	3.5	0.58	3.7	0.56	1.426	0.160

One way ANOVA was conducted to identify the differences in the mean rating for the variables between consumers of different religion. The results of ANOVA are presented in Table 8. The findings of the results indicate that there were no major significant differences among the consumers belonging to different religions on the variables like Health Concern and Lifestyle, Food product quality, Subjective norms male and female consumers of organic foods in all the variables.

Table 8: ANOVA to study the significance of difference in mean rating for the variables in terms of religion

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Environmental	Between Groups	3.102	2	1.551	3.418*	0.041
	Within Groups	21.325	47	.454		
	Total	24.427	49			
Health Concern and Lifestyle	Between Groups	2.239	2	1.119	3.129	0.053
	Within Groups	16.817	47	.358		
	Total	19.056	49			
Food product quality	Between Groups	1.199	2	.599	1.233	0.301
	Within Groups	22.842	47	.486		
	Total	24.041	49			
Subjective norms	Between Groups	1.355	2	.678	1.463	0.242
	Within Groups	21.772	47	.463		
	Total	23.128	49			
Attitude towards organic food	Between Groups	.305	2	.152	.197	0.822
	Within Groups	36.318	47	.773		
	Total	36.623	49			
Purchase intention	Between Groups	2.578	2	1.289	4.389*	0.018

	Within Groups	13.800	47	.294		
	Total	16.377	49			

7. Conclusion

The overall awareness on organic food products among the public is increasing and their attitude towards purchase intention is positive. The results of the study further show that the reasons advocated by the consumers for buying organic food products are varied and primarily the motivations behind their decision to purchase include concerns for environment, health concern and lifestyle, food product quality and their subjective norms. Consumer behaviour involves the psychological processes that consumers go through in recognizing needs, finding ways to solve these needs; collect and interpret information; make plans and implement these plans, making purchase decisions and post-purchase behaviour. Consumer behaviour is the key to the impact that society has on the environment. Nowadays consumer behaviour is changing towards purchase of many environmental-friendly and organic products, due to awareness of environmental degradation and the related issues.

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