

CONSUMERS' PERCEPTION AND PURCHASE INTENTION TOWARDS
ORGANIC FOOD PRODUCTS

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Dedicated to my beloved father and mother, family,
supervisor and friends.

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ABSTRACT

This study is about the discoveries on the factors affecting purchase intention of organic food in Malaysia. Nowadays, in today's modern world a new consumer lifestyle has emerged especially in the attitude of consuming organic food. This phenomenon has occurred because people are beginning to be aware of the importance of consuming healthy food in their daily lives. This study attempt to determine the consumers' purchase intention based on Theory of Planned Behaviour. There are six factors that are used in this study to examine the influence towards the purchase intention of organic food products. The factors are perceived health, environmental friendly and animal welfare, quality, price, safety and availability to measure the relation with purchase intention. Data was collected in supermarkets and wet markets around Johor Bahru, Malaysia area. Total number of 200 respondents did complete the questionnaires that had been distributed, representing 87% return rate. The analysis had been done using descriptive statistics, factor analysis, Cronbach Alpha reliability test, Pearson correlation and multiple regression method. The results gained from this study indicated that consumers' purchase intention are significantly influenced by their perception of organic food products which are perceived health, environmental friendly and animal welfare, quality, price, safety and availability. The findings are beneficial to marketers and retailers to develop the suitable marketing strategies to attract consumers' attention towards their products.

Key words: Theory of Planned Behavior, Consumer's perception, Purchase intention

ABSTRAK

Kajian ini adalah mengenai penemuan kepada faktor-faktor yang memberi kesan kepada kecenderungan pembelian makanan organik di Malaysia. Pada masa kini, di dunia moden hari ini, gaya hidup pengguna yang baru telah muncul terutamanya dari segi kecenderungan mereka terhadap produk makanan organik. Fenomena ini terjadi kerana pengguna telah mula sedar akan kepentingan memakan makanan sihat dalam kehidupan seharian. Kajian ini dijalankan bagi mengenalpasti kecenderungan pembelian berdasarkan Teori Tingkahlaku Terancang. Terdapat enam faktor yang digunakan dalam kajian ini untuk mengkaji pengaruh terhadap kecenderungan pembelian produk makanan organik. Faktor-faktornya adalah kesihatan, mesra alam sekitar dan kebajikan haiwan, kualiti, harga, keselamatan dan ketersediaan untuk mengkaji hubungannya dengan kecenderungan untuk membeli. Data dikumpulkan di beberapa pasaraya dan pasar basah sekitar Johor Bharu. Seramai 200 orang responden telah menyelesaikan boring kaji selidik yang telah diedarkan mewakili 87% kadar pemulangan. Analisis telah dilakukan menggunakan statistic deskriptif, analisis factor, ujian kebolehpercayaan Cronbach Alpha, korelasi Pearson dan kaedah regrasi berganda. Keputusan yang diperolehi daripada kajian ini menunjukkan bahawa kecenderungan pengguna membeli produk makanan organik adalah dipengaruhi oleh persepsi mereka terhadap kesihatan, mesra alam sekitar dan kebajikan haiwan, kualiti, harga, keselamatan dan ketersediaan. Hasil kajian ini memberi manfaat kepada pemasar dan peruncit untuk membangunkan strategi pemasaran yang sesuai untuk menarik perhatian pengguna terhadap produk mereka.

Kata kunci: Teori Tingkahlaku Terancang, Persepsi pengguna, Kecenderungan pembelian

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This chapter will briefly introduces the background of this study and the problem been faced in general. It will briefly discuss the objectives and the scope of the study. In addition, it will describe the significance and research methodology of this study.

1.2 Background of the Study

Growing in environmental consciousness in relation with concerns about safer food had led consumer to starts doubt about modern agriculture practices. Contrast with organic food farming methods, it gives assurance of a process that led to less damage to environment and produce food which is healthier than conventionally grown food. The

information and idea of organic food might be not widespread among consumers in Malaysia specifically. The production of organic food always based on the nature sources which also can lead to the ecological synchronization compared to non-organic food.

Organic food can provide various benefits to its consumers such as the nutrient contain are a lot more than non-organic food. In Malaysia, there is action taken by the government to curb the issue of organic food labeling. In 2003, the Department of Agriculture (DOA) had the idea to initiate Skim Organik Malaysia (SOM) which has a role as a compulsory certification needed by local farms that claim to practice the organic way of agriculture. So, consumer can recognize organic food easily.

Perception can be described as consumer response towards company's products and services (Mary, 2014). In easy way, it also can be defined as process of choosing, organizing and interpreting sensations into a meaningful whole (Hanna, 2013). Company that create good products and better services along with good value, may be considered has positive perception. Good perception may also put the company into reliable state towards the investors. Negative impact mirrors that the company not favourable to consumers also to investors. The response from consumer can be acquired through variety tools of research so that company can develop strategies to improve their position in market (Mary, 2014).

This study applied the Theory of Planned Behaviour. The Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) started as the Theory of Reasoned Action in 1980 to predict an individual's intention to engage in a behavior at a specific time and place. The theory was intended to explain all behaviors over which people have the ability to exert self-control. The key component to this model is behavioral intent; behavioral intentions are

influenced by the attitude about the likelihood that the behavior will have the expected outcome and the subjective evaluation of the risks and benefits of that outcome.

Based on the discussion of previous studies and literature review, it has been found that there are six factors that highly contribute to consumers' purchase intention of organic food products, which are health, environmental friendly and animal welfare, quality, price, safety and availability of organic food products. This study considers consumers' perception of organic food products as the independent variables (IV) while consumers' purchase intention of organic food products as dependent variable (DV).

Thus, in this study the researcher want to examine the factors of health, environmental friendly and animal welfare, quality, price, safety and availability of organic food products that can lead to consumers' purchase intention. The researcher believes that this study will bring many benefits to the marketers and retailers because they will realize the factors that can encourage their consumers in purchasing organic food products.

1.3 Problem Statement

The increasing of organic products' demand globally influenced by these thought, even though the prices of organic food are premium which normally could be double or triple price of the non-organic food. However, the demand for organic food in Malaysia is still small, but it seems to be grows positively in time (Zhen M, 2014).

Based on feedback and opinions that been received by the non-governmental organization (NGO) in Malaysia, it shows that local demand towards organic food is certainly greater than the supply. The Organic Alliance Malaysia (OAM) director, Ong Kung Wai (2013) shares that the local organic agriculture is still at the budding stage. Determined by the domestic demand and focusing on fresh vegetables and fruits, the immensity of the organic managed land is statistically minor.

The Organic Farming Project Coordinator of Environment Technology & Development, Malaysia (CETDEM), Tan Siew Luang shares that majority of the local organic farmers in this country are just plant vegetables to supply the instant market. Other than that, the market is still lack of organic fruits, poultry, livestock and meat. There exist demand for organic livestock; nonetheless, most of the farmers do not want to that the risk (Zhen M, 2014).

Organic food defined not only by the food product but it starts by the way it was produced. Organic food is the product that been grown and processed by using organic farming methods which encourage good biodiversity and methods that recycle resources. For organic farming, the important part is that the grown up process for the harvest must be without using synthetic pesticides, bioengineered genes, petroleum-based fertilizers and also sewage sludge-based fertilizers. In a meantime, for organic livestock, it is necessity for the animals to have access to the outdoors in the grown up process. Organic livestock also should not be given antibiotics or growth hormones.

As early as year 1965, researcher had explored the consumers' attitude towards the use of chemical pesticides and fertilizers in conventional agriculture (Bearler and Willits, 1968). That marked the beginning of the era where people start to become more concern with preserving the environment. Nonetheless, because of consumer need and

demand, the production in agricultural sector need to be expanded widely in order to ensure the continuity of the food supply.

Consumer perception towards company and their products plays a very important role in their success. Company that has the positive perception of consumer towards their products or services has the high possibility to attract the interest of new investors joining the company. This will open the company chance to expands and widen up their business production. This is important because it induces market expert and consumers getting positive perceptive of the products. In marketing, perception can be directly label as consumer information processing. When consumer use and make initial contact with the products, they will begin to create perception whether positive or negative.

Most research findings evaluate that the more people perception and perceive the worth of buying organic food products, the higher their intention to purchase the products. Most of the researchers found out that the most convincing reason that consumer choose to purchase organic food products is because of the health safety related issues and the concern of the environment nature friendliness (Maria et al., 2001; Anna et al., 2002; Anthanasios et al., 2005; Francisco et al., 2002). Some researchers had found that the other reason consumers who are less likely to purchase organic food are because of the price which is considerably slightly higher than non-organic food.

In other research, the findings justified that consumer value can be used as the instrument to measure the long-term satisfaction and also their continuing tendency to purchase organic food. Other than that, consumer perception is correlated with their willingness to pay for organic food. Consumers concern about their affordability which requires them to spend money on organic food whether value their money or vice versa.

Hence, Many studies have been conducted to verify the factors that influence consumers' purchase intention of organic food products such as health, quality and environmental friendly (Dickieson, 2009; Roitner, 2006). Therefore, this study tested some significant factors of consumers' purchase intention.

1.4 Research Questions

According to the problem statement mentioned above, this study specifically concentrates on the factors that contribute to consumers' purchase intention in the selected markets of Johor Bahru area.

Therefore, in addressing the underlying issues related to this study, the following questions were raised:

- 1) What are consumers' perceptions towards organic food?
- 2) What are the factors that influence consumers' purchase intention towards organic food?

The research questions have been translated into the following hypotheses, which are subsequently tested with the data collected from the questionnaire distribute to selected markets.

H1: Perceived health of organic food products will positively affect the purchase intention.

H2: Perceived environmental friendly and animal welfare of organic food products will positively affect the purchase intention.

H3: Perceived quality of organic food products will positively affect the purchase intention.

H4: Perceived price of organic food products will positively affect the purchase intention.

H5: Perceived safety of organic food products will positively affect the purchase intention.

H6: Perceived availability of organic food products will positively affect the purchase intention.

1.5 Objectives of the Study

This study highlights several research objectives related to consumers' perception and purchase intention towards organic food products.

This study seeks to discover the objectives as follows:

- 1) To determine consumers' perception towards organic food product.
- 2) To determine the influence of consumers' perception on purchase intention.

1.6 Scope of the Study

This study includes analysis for the sample of 200 respondents. This study only focuses on respondents who live around Johor Bahru. The data collection will be done at shopping malls and organic outlets where people buying their home groceries.

1.7 Significance of the Study

Even though the market of organic products starts to grow, the demand on organic food is still unstable. In Malaysia, purchasing organic food is still not a popular trend among consumers. Throughout this study, it can be helpful for marketing managers, producers and seller of organic food products to develop the most suitable strategy in order to get the higher level market share. It is very significant to find out the underlying factors that might influence the tendency of consumers to purchase organic food products. Since theoretically it is stated in Theory of Planned Behaviour that study of purchasing and consumers' consumption behavior are important.

This study is believed could help to formulate an effective market communication and policy strategies in order to influence consumer behavior towards organic food. There might be difference in term of socio demographic issue between well developed countries and developing countries like Malaysia. As most of the research about this topic focus within the developed countries such as United States, thus this study might help marketers to gain idea about consumers' perception towards organic food in developing country.

1.8 Research Organization Plan

The organization of research plan for this study follows the steps as shown below:

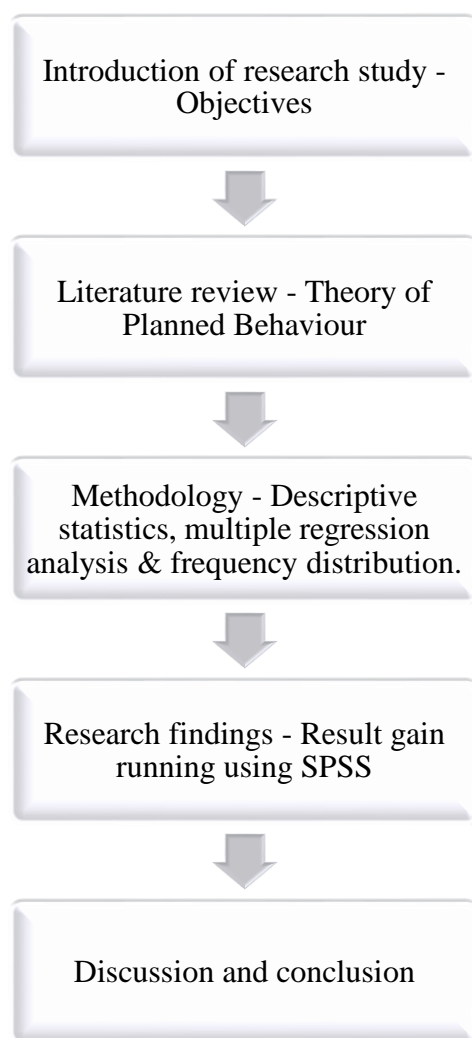


Figure 1 Research organization plan

1) Chapter 1 : Introduction

In this initiation chapter, it will discuss briefly about the background of this study, the objectives that express this study purpose, research questions, scope of the study, research plan, research limitation and the operational definition.

2) Chapter 2 : Literature review

In this phase, searching for information for the secondary data throughout journals, articles, books and online journals to get the idea of organic food, consumers perception and their behaviour. In this chapter will include the information from previous study by other researchers that related to this research.

3) Chapter 3 : Methodology

After investigate the problem, collection of the information needed will be done and researcher got to understand the nurture of the problem occurs. This stage requires researcher to determine the main problems and issues befall in this study.

4) Chapter 4 : Research findings

After determining the problems, researcher plans the method that best suitable to solve them. In this study, researcher uses the descriptive statistics, multiple regression analysis and frequency distribution. Statistical Package of the Social Science (SPSS) had been used to analyze the data in this study.

5) Chapter 5 : Discussion and conclusion

In this final part, researcher will discuss the results that had been achieved in previous part. It will discuss the reason and probability beyond the results. In this part also researcher examine whether the results attained meet the objectives that had been proposed or not.

1.9 Research Limitation

Throughout this study, there are some research limitations and barriers had to be faced by researcher. Firstly, related with the sample size in this study which 200. It might not be accurate and suitable to represent whole state. If the sample size can be expanded, it would be much better. Due to limited time constraint, small sample size had been selected to be examined around Johor Bahru only but cannot reflect better research outcomes of purchasing organic food products trend in Johor. The questionnaires been distributed only in certain locations in Johor Bahru.

Besides, there is also challenging to researcher that realize while distributing questionnaires to respondents, there are some respondents answer the questions prepared without faithful and truthful. This is might be because they want to finish answering the questionnaires quickly and did not pay full attention answering the information needed from them. Hence, the results attained after analyzing the data might not be fully valid and reliable.

1.10 Operational Definition

1) Organic food

Organic food is the product that been grown and processed by using organic farming methods which encourage good biodiversity and methods that recycle resources. For organic farming, the important part is that the grown up process for the harvest must be without using synthetic pesticides, bioengineered genes, petroleum-based fertilizers and also sewage sludge-based fertilizers. For organic livestock, it is necessity for the animals to have access to the outdoors in the grown up process without being given antibiotics or growth hormones

2) Consumer perception

Perception can be described as consumer response towards company's products and services. It is a process of choosing, organizing and interpreting sensations into a meaningful whole.

3) Purchase intention

The plan in which a person intends to buy a particular goods or service sometime in the near future. The plan is to buy an item but the timing is left to the individual to plan.

4) Theory of Planned Behaviour

The theory that argues an individual's intention to perform a behavior is influenced by a combination of behavioral attitudes (i.e. a person's beliefs about the desirability of behaviors); subjective norms (i.e. a person's perceived relevance and importance of opinions of significant others); and behavioral control (i.e. a person's sense of control over behavior) (Ajzen 1991).

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